THE PASTOR'S CORNER

William Melville Curry

Alva M. Kerr

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The Pastor's Corner

An Intimate Discussion of Moral and Spiritual Problems

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With Introduction by
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TO MY FATHER,

Whose strength of Christian character was the inspiration of my youth, this book is affectionately dedicated.

INTRODUCTION

HERE is an extensive group of exquisite miniatures, each one complete in its engaging message of counsel and of cheer. These word pictures first appeared on the pages of a church calendar, one each Sunday, bringing inspiration from the heart of a thoughtful pastor to the lives of his thankful people; then a widening circle, in other churches, was included in this weekly ministry; and now, in this volume, a valuable collection of these messages is placed in permanent form and is assured of a large circulation and of continuing usefulness.

These brief compositions are phrased in terse and vivid terms; they are characterized by quiet humor, practical wisdom and spiritual insight. They cover a wide range of themes, express a variety of moods, and indicate a habit of close observation and an unusual ability to interpret the commonplace in terms of abiding moral values. Many of them are based upon simple personal experiences, upon ordinary incidents, upon topics of the day, and upon present problems of the Church, but all bear upon the philosophy and the conduct of Christian life.

Even a glance through these pages will impress one with the fact that the author has been flooding with

light The Pastor's Corner of a church bulletin. His success will stimulate fellow-ministers to utilize, more fully than they have done, this means of approach to the minds and hearts of their people; and the publication of these words of homely wisdom, of personal conviction and of friendly advice, will bring to many readers thoughts that convey instruction, courage and strength.

CHARLES R. ERDMAN.

Princeton, N. J.

PREFACE

THE Pastor's Corner is a great deal more to me than space in the weekly Bulletin of the church, more than essays or messages. It is more than opportunity and responsibility, although it is all of these.

The Pastor's Corner is a place to which I have gone with the moral and spiritual problems of my pastorate. It is a quiet place where I could think things through in an intimate way with those for whom I am responsible. Here we could speak about things that had no rightful place in the worship of the sanctuary. Questions that agitate the public mind, problems that beset the Church, dangers that lurk under cover, are appraised and set down in the light of the lamp in the Pastor's Corner.

There is a right angle from which to view events. That angle has been earnestly sought. How often even Christians see "men as trees walking"! Most troubles and failures arise from misunderstanding. Understanding and concord come by seeing from the right angle. Truth sets us free from strife. The Pastor's Corner has endeavored to be a Right Angle.

To get a moral perspective on church problems, to keep back the moral horizon for young people, so constantly and all but irresistibly narrowing, the Pas-

tor has wrought in his corner. All kinds of people come through the portals of the church. They think all kinds of thoughts. Shall their thoughts be brought into captivity of the law of Christ? To this task the Pastor's Corner is devoted.

What a wonderful place it has been! But, like all gardens or places where things worth while grow, it has been a place of hard work. And, like all who set their hand to a plow, the Pastor wishes the plowing might have been better done.

In response to many requests from those whose judgment I trust, these ninety-seven are herewith presented.

Philadelphia.

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1

"BUT IT WILL BE BEAUTIFUL"

FLOWERFIELD is a station on the railroad along the north shore of Long Island. It is well named, for flower field it is. It is a tiresome ride out that way because the Pennsylvania seems to forget all about time east of New York. That train is always getting ready to stop or laboriously getting under way. After a few trips the traveler has inspected the details of the stations along the leisurely way so minutely that they are likely to reproduce themselves in his dreams. I do not more than half blame the railroad for the extra hour it puts in this fifty-mile ride, because the Island is full of interest. There are so many well-dressed gentlemen at every stop extending cordial invitations to go with them to some wonderful villa, manor or hotel. I let my imagination go on all occasions, but I stay on the train which proceeds to jerk itself into motion and ultimately we get to Stony Brook, my usual Long Island destination.

One day last summer I drove to Flowerfield to select some flowers for a sick friend. Some messages are best transmitted by flowers. Their silent loveliness is eloquent. I like to select the flowers myself, and for this reason and because Flowerfield is a place of exquisite beauty, I spent the afternoon there. Flowers were everywhere, rows and banks of them. How beautiful they were! The fields were a song of praise in color.

God knows best how to say it with flowers. It is a wonder that such beauty can spring out of the ground. You would expect it only from Elysian fields far removed from ordinary life. But out of the common earth the sun had drawn all this grace. Some unseen prism seemed to spread the glory of the rainbow across the common soil. The sky had brought from the earth the best it had. I went back and forth among the flowers making my selections. While my package was being wrapped for shipment I observed a man closing up a box of dry roots. The contrast impressed me and I said to him, "Your box does not have much beauty in it." He replied: "No; but what is in this box will be beautiful one day if it has a chance."

The flowers I had chosen went on their way to brighten the hours of my friend, and what this workman said kept turning itself in my mind as I guided my car into a favorite way along the shore. There was no promise of beauty in those dry roots that my eye could detect. But the florist had told me they would be like the flowers I had sent if given a chance; flowers beautiful beyond words. Then the Scripture came to me, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." But both the roots and the soul must have a chance; and He is our chance.

2

OUR WHITE OAK TREE

"TO our white oak tree," was so often the direction given the driver when the basket was packed for an out-of-doors supper. It was beautiful for situation on the bank above a rocky stream, a stone's throw from the river. One evening in the late summer we had finished our supper and were passing a carefree hour under its outreaching arms when one of our company remarked, "How wise and how wonderful is this old oak!" It certainly had made much of its opportunity. I wondered whether some discerning eye had chosen this bank above the stream for this oak; or whether some chance acorn had taken root and just grew. It is surely older than the old mill across the stream, whose ponderous overshot wheel was making a great ado about some small task as we were speaking. It is like turning time backward a whole century to step into that mill. It is creaky, decrepit and devoid of the mystic spirit of modern machinery. The tree and the mill had grown old together, but how differently!

This great tree seemed so quiet upon its eminence, presiding over its beautiful little valley. One thinks of Paul's suggestion to Timothy that he should study to be quiet. Its very strength enables it to be quiet. Its leaves whispered to us that summer evening under the influence of the soughing wind. Even the tempest is

unable to arouse it. Quietly it reaches into the sky for what it needs. It mines the bank for treasure without scarring the earth. Through the summers it has expanded its life and grown great. Through the winters it has toughened and hardened its fiber. Storms have surged about it, caught its great arms as if to lift it from its place on the bank, but the storm passed and the oak had extracted strength from the storm. As we lay on the bank looking up through the branches to the fleecy clouds in the darkening sky of evening, birds came and went chirping their own thoughts to the tree. And one night as I passed a whipporwill was voicing his weird call to his mate from a lower branch and taking the whole valley into his confidence.

We tarried until the sun set behind the hills of Pennsylvania and the glow faded out of the sky and the stars came out. The dusk obscured the outlines of the valley and darkness blotted it all out. A silvery moon lifted its rim above the trees, restoring something of the beauty of the day, and I did not wonder that someone called it Paradise Valley! Regretfully we gathered our things together to go back to the city for our evening engagements. As we drove away I wondered just what the Psalmist meant when he said of a good man, "He shall be like a tree, planted by the river!"

3

"I BELONG BUT I DO NOT GO"

WAS it a confession of wrong or a statement of fact one man was making to another about his church? They met casually and were discussing neighborhood matters. When the church was mentioned one said, "I belong there but never go." On being questioned as to why, no good reason was given, himself being the judge. Minor things assumed major proportions from the personal point of view or through obliquity of vision. I do not know in his case what excuses were given, but I think I could supply them. It may have been because the minister did or did not wear a gown, because the sermons were too long or dealt too much or too little with current affairs. It may have been the music, too operatic or too common; too much of it or not enough. Sometimes members do not attend because of the presence of other people who are objectionable or because of objectionable men in the Session. The list is interminable if one sets out to construct it. I am not speaking of ill-health or age.

Every congregation suffers from this sort of thing. At times it assumes the proportion of a spiritual epidemic. Members who do not attend services do more harm than they think. It is not an idle saying in scripture, "Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together." If we neglect the ordinances of the Church we thereby help to destroy them. Membership in the

Church gives God a complimentary vote, but by non-attendance our influence and example are against the Church. We are not helping forward the work which Christ and His disciples initiated, but are counted against Him by the world. Non-attendance is the back door of the Church and means after a time non-membership, if not for ourselves certainly for our children. It is a staggering figure given every year by the General Assembly of those who thus eliminate themselves. Last year the figure was 60,680. I wonder if there were not about 60,680 reasons given for non-attendance. No excuse can justify absence from the worship of God's house. It erects itself into an argument against Christ and His Church.

What are we going to do about it? What can we do about it? The General Assembly urges action and proposes methods of one sort or another. There is only one efficient way to overcome this malady, this lure of the present world. It is not by having better services, although that helps. It can be overcome by personal interest and personal influence on the part of a loyal forward-moving congregation. A loyal membership can beat down flimsy excuses and by personal influence bring the absent back into the services. It is a task in which the minister has his part and the choirmaster can help and the officers can bear their responsibility. But the task belongs to the whole Church. Will you not take it upon yourself to rectify this evil in your Church? And remember that no excuse anyone gives can be accepted, for it is an argument against Christ and His Church.

4

"SOUNDS LIKE A PACK!"

HAVE you ever heard the weird screams and yells of the coyote? They linger in my ears from that first night in our prairie home. The first startling suggestion is the frightened cry of a child which deepens into anguish. It becomes a scream of pain, a yell of hate, the wail as of a lost soul. The single voice which you first hear breaks into a strident, horrible chorus of repellent sounds that rise and fall over a wide cadence. Through it all there is the cry of pain and anguish as of a dog being done to death. If you are sleeping in the open it brings a shiver to be awakened by such satanic minstrelsy, even after you have grown familiar with it. This creature of the prairie so often heard was seldom seen. He skulked in the dark. He was so fleet of foot that only the best of the greyhounds were able to overtake him. Notwithstanding my fleet pony and my long-range gun and my dog of unusual intelligence, I never brought one of these creatures to earth. Cleverly he hid himself in the brush along the stream through the day. He belonged to the night by instinct and occupation.

We had come to our unfinished shelter on the prairie. What beautiful rolling land it was! Unfenced and uncharted fields of God! Prairie grass and prairie flowers as far as the eye could reach. But that first night we were disposed about our improvised home having

a quiet time after a busy day. There was not a cloud in the sky. The moon had risen in silvery beauty. The moon always seemed to shine better on the prairie where there was nothing to cast a shadow. Mother was planning for the night. An old settler had dropped in to talk with the newcomers. The problems of the new country afforded ample topics for conversation. It was this first night in our new home that the skulking coyote let loose his diabolical charivari. A great fear took hold of me. I wondered if those beautiful prairies were the ranges of lost spirits. My father, looking out into the night, said: "That sounds like a pack." Our visitor, familiar with the country, said: "No, there is only one."

I have often thought since that night of the voice that sounds like a pack. It is heard by pioneers, by those who build camp-fires and open new ways. It is heard by the business man who ventures, by the reformer who is on before, by the man who would follow his star. It may be the treble tones of a woman or the heavier voice of a man; but it sounds like a pack. It is a voice that by instinct and occupation belongs to the night. That night my father read by the lantern's flickering light the stately sentences of the ninety-first Psalm: "He shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence. Under his wings shalt thou trust." As we knelt in prayer on the virgin soil of the prairie the fear of the voice that sounds like a pack vanished and the beauty of the night was again upon us.

5

"ALWAYS ASKING FOR MONEY"

MONEY, the equivalent of property, has a vital relation both to the Kingdom of God and the character of the individual. This fact is often overlooked as we think of "salvation without money and without price." Salvation is free in that we cannot buy it. It comes through grace. But once it is ours, it claims control of all things. It becomes central. On a recent Sunday a parishioner said to me, "You are always asking for money." Now, as a matter of fact, money is seldom referred to in our services. But, still, he was right, for the logic of the situation is a constant appeal for support. It would be a queer sort of Gospel that did not have it. Hymn-books wear out. Equipment of all sorts must be replaced. Without missions there can be no church. It takes resources to build anything, to conduct any sort of enterprise. The Church cannot escape from this economic fact. Jesus did not mean that it should. Most moral questions head up into the treasury. The last thing Jesus did before taking final leave of the Temple was to make observations at the treasury.

A church officer one day asked a friend for a contribution for his church and received the reply, "You are always asking for money," the identical words spoken to me. The answer of this church officer was worthy of the Church. "Yes, that is so," he said.

"When my son was a lad he was costly. He was always needing clothes and shoes and food. The older and stronger he grew, the more money he required. But that boy sickened and died. Now he costs me nothing." A church that is alive needs money. Are we interested enough in our church to want it to live?

The difficulty with most of us is that we do not go about our giving in a systematic way. We usually give under stress of appeals and we think we give more than we do. We remember the pain of the extraction. A few minutes with pad and pencil will likely be a revelation to you in this matter unless you have been keeping books with God. God has planned large things for the Church and He is asking for large support. I have often wondered at the irritation that seems to be aroused by the call of the Church for service and funds. The right way to answer such an appeal is with real thought first of all, and then with such gifts of time and money as may be within our ability. I know about the stress of the days through which we are passing. The temptation is strong to forget God. But let us remember that our gifts to the cause of Christ become the basis of our evaluation of Christ and His Church. It is in every way profitable to keep books with God.

6

"MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE!"

WE love the national anthem, and with open throats we join in the swelling refrain, "Of thee I sing." But if we really love our country we must do more than sing the national anthem at public functions. We hear it said in public speech, "This is a Christian nation." I believe the Supreme Court once said it in a formal decision. But it is a Christian nation only for the sake of argument. It is Christian only in the traditional aspect. Our country is reeking with that which is un-Christian. We are often faced with the question as to whether much of our current Christianity is really Christian or merely sectarian. There is no semblance of patriotism in shutting our eyes to the real facts of our national life. We must sing the national anthem with our eyes open. Jesus was bringing religion down to earth and to the life of the earth when He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." If we truly love our country we will do more than sing.

To many among us the question of National Missions is purely theoretical. We are surrounded by churches and schools. These are in such proximity that they often engage in an unhappy contest for adherents. The story of treeless towns on the plains without the forms of religion, of churchless lumber camps deep in the solitude of the woods, of the cluster

of unpainted houses without God, called a mining camp, of the little settlement in the mountains where its children never heard of a Sunday-school, brings little response because we do not realize the truth. We may weep over the well-told story as the theatre audience weeps over the suffering depicted on the stage and straightway forgets. The suffering and situation belong to another world more or less unreal. But we dare not be smug provincials in such a country as ours, with every problem of the world festering. There is a vast field for National Missions because America is not really Christian. Our great overchurched city has its underchurched and unevangelized sections.

There come back to me now from my childhood the impressions of a community which Ralph Connor might have used as he used his Selkirks. Settlers were here and there on the unsurveyed prairies. With the railroad came the prairie town. Two or three gathered about themselves a little Sunday-school in the one-room school building. Then came the missionary to build foundations in the new country. Grover Cleveland said in a notable address that home missions saved the West for our national domain, and President Coolidge recently said, "I can conceive no adequate remedy for the evils which beset society except through the influence of religion." National Missions is the Church carrying religion to the neglected places of our beloved land.

7

"BURNING PATHS THROUGH THE STORM"

WE were sitting on the back steps of our manse, my lad and I, on a mid-summer afternoon. He has since gone to heaven, while I have stayed on, daily missing the touch of his hand. He had an imagination that made him a good companion and filled his world with living things. A severe summer storm had swept over the hills and valleys of the lower Allegheny. Thunder storms are at their best, or perhaps some would say at their worst, among these hills. The rolling thunder seems to bound from hill to hill. I have often thought as I listened to the ongoing of these storms of the line of the Psalm, "The God of glory thundereth." There is such a difference in storms. Those in the West which I have witnessed, some of them at uncomfortably close range, have been such businesslike affairs. They seem to be in a hurry as they engulf the horizon and race across the prairie. But these storms among the hills pour out their energy leisurely. They take time between the acts and the plot is more varied.

The manse was located at the lower end of a little suburban city just above Pittsburgh. From our back steps we looked across into the church-yard where two giant oaks watched before the church. They seemed a part of the beautiful little church, always painted white with green trimmings. I recall how clean and

white it looked that afternoon against the black cloud and the green hill after the torrential storm had washed it. Just beyond the church a narrow valley opened into the larger valley of the river. A few minutes' walk around the brow of the hill took you from the town. In my day the town and country met at the foot of that hill. How often have I followed the stream up that winding valley for miles. Now it was handing back and forth from hill to hill the echoes of the storm and in it was heard the sound of swollen streams and rivulets.

The storm was lingering just at the top of the great hill which rose in a wide sweep toward the clouds. It had not spent its force in rolling over us. The livid lines of lightning played over the face of that storm. It was such a scene as only God could enact with the earth and sky for a stage. We sat watching the receding storm. We were not saying much, as the scene was etching itself on memory. But one remark of the lad remained with me. Perhaps he saw more clearly than did his father. "God is burning paths through the storm," he said as he watched the play of lightning. And if God has made paths through the deep, why not through the storm?

8

"YET WE ARE BUT TENANTS"

CAPE COD is like a great, sandy fish-hook cast out into the Atlantic. Whatever else it catches, it always lands a generous batch of tourists. A fine road runs out to Provincetown, on the very end of the hook, where the fisherman hangs his bait. It is a wonderful ride along that road among the pines and the sand hills with the unsurpassed views of the ocean. It is like a sea voyage on wheels. Besides the tang of the salt air, the traveler has the fragrance of the pines. This sandy hook would seem to exist only by the sufferance of the ocean. It has taken advantage of "Squatter Sovereignty" rights in the domain of the sea. Or one might think of it as an arm of land extended of God to enfold weary, storm-beaten Pilgrims as they came over the unpathed, seditious waters. One likes to look at the sheltered harbor within the hook where they cast down their anchor after the perilous adventure. There is little wonder on the cape except the wonder of the sea. Perhaps that is why so many seafaring men have settled there. It is a compromise on their part whereby they do not wholly give up the sea. Ever since blind Homer sat listening to the sea and holding converse with it in his darkness, the charm of the sea has haunted the human heart.

Out along this fine road one summer afternoon we

stopped at a bit of a village with the attractive name of Sandwich. I saw no visible reason for the name and there was no tablet to enlighten the traveler. By the roadside was the grave of Joseph Jefferson, the friend of Grover Cleveland. He was one of the great entertainers of all time. Seldom has a man ever had such power to kindle emotions or interpret life. It was by his direction that he was buried here under a pine tree in a little cemetery. A field boulder had been rolled to the grave and on it was fixed a bronze tablet which bore in metal words one of his own sentences: "Yet we are but tenants. Let us assure ourselves of this and then it will not be so hard to make room for the new administration. For shortly the great Landlord will give us notice that our lease has expired." The lease had expired and here was his empty form and his great sentiment.

Jefferson had it right. He felt so confident of it that he put it in bronze over his wayside grave. That which we strive so hard to possess is in its possession not really ours. My farm has belonged to a procession and I am but one in the procession. My name is not written on anything I possess in any indelible way. This was what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven." For our moral qualities are really ours.

9

VOICES OF AN OLD HOUSE

VACATION gives the minister a chance to climb up out of his rut and look around the horizon to see what other folks have been doing. The pressure of pulpit and pastoral responsibilities and the care of the church give the average minister small chance to look beyond his own parish lines. During my vacation this summer, while wandering about Cape Cod, I had the pleasure of a few intimate days with an old house. There is something about a house that is almost human and an old house seems like an old friend.

It was built in 1680 by Joseph Bartlett, son of Robert Bartlett, who came over in the *Anne*. When the colony began to expand beyond the settlement at Plymouth, Joseph went across the ridge and built this house at what is now Manomet. I have always loved to rummage in attics, and this one fascinated me. The great beams that carried the roof had been hewn out by the Pilgrims or their children. The trusses were held together by dowel-pins that age had hardened like iron. There the pins were as they had been formed and driven home by these early builders of houses and institutions. The rains and snows of centuries had fallen upon that roof. The storms of the ocean had swept in over this house and the winds had moaned and shrieked about it in the darkness. Many of the

original boards were under the more modern shingles of the roof. I was attracted by a cradle in which the Bartlett generation had been rocked. There was a spinning-wheel of ancient vintage, idle now, for the hands that used it have failed. It belongs to a day that is strange to us. A Jacobean chest of the fifteenth century stood against the wall. It probably came over in the first ships with the Bartlett stuff in it. There was a queer bed as old as the house itself.

Down-stairs in what was the sitting-room was a great fireplace. Here the Pilgrims spent their evenings and winter days. They say the house is haunted and I readily believe it. As I stood before the fireplace I fancied I saw phantoms and heard voices out of the past. For before this fireplace the problem of the witches had been discussed as a question of the day; and the danger of Indian raids and the " Boston Tea Party," the battles of the War for Independence, the adoption of the Constitution, the menace of slavery and the battles of the Civil War, the laying of the Atlantic cable and the coming of the telephone. The history of the new world had been discussed as questions of the day by the generations before the burning logs or smouldering embers. I felt the majesty of the old house. It has been occupied by a Bartlett ever since the builder occupied it. It is now used as a summer home by a Bartlett, a lineal descendant of Joseph. I felt that day that if the " fashion of the world " passes away, man himself passes more quickly.

10

"YOU MAY DEPEND ON ME"

THE train I was on had stopped in the early evening at a small town in Texas. It was a splendid Rock Island train running from Dallas to Chicago. I stepped out on the station platform while the train was exchanging passengers and taking on water for the engine. A few steps along the platform is refreshing after hours on the train. While passing along I observed a man with a little girl approaching the Pullman conductor. From the conversation I learned that she was going to her mother in Kansas City. The man was placing her in the conductor's care and asking him to look after her. The conductor replied, "You may depend on me." I saw the conductor hand the little girl to her mother when we reached Kansas City the next day.

I have never forgotten the words of that conductor: "You may depend on me." What a wonderful trait dependability is! Without it nothing can go forward. No organization can hold together. The general must depend on his officers and men. The patrons of a bank must depend on the president and the directors. The company and the public must depend on the engineer in the cab. A flaw in the rail, due to carelessness or poor workmanship in the mill, may send far and wide a story of sorrow.

It was a heart-searching moment in the upper room

when Jesus said: "One of you shall betray me." Each looked inside his own heart and then to the Master with the question, "Lord, is it I?" It would seem that every one of them recognized a potential traitor in himself. The thing might be! Judas had been chosen treasurer on merit, while Peter had within him that which later led to denial of his Lord. James and John were ambitious for preferment. It seems the disciples did not suspect Judas, but each in surprise was asking concerning himself. As long as there are companies of disciples on earth there will always be betrayals. Only unqualified devotion to Jesus assures dependable discipleship. Every thought brought into captivity to the law of Christ banishes the question, "Lord, is it I?" A few hours later from the cross Jesus looked at John, then at His mother and said, "Son, behold thy mother!" The Lord was giving him a commission concerning His mother for the rest of the way. It was a mark of confidence which John never forgot and never betrayed. Jesus said to Simon, "Thou shalt be a rock." It was a wondrous prophecy and confidence which Peter held sacred. It would gladden the heart of the Christ if, from the lips and hearts of millions of disciples, came the response of the appeal of Jesus, "You may depend on me."

11

"I WONDER WHO THAT FELLOW IS!"

I HAD gone back, on one of my vacations, to my boyhood home in the West. It was a fine little town on one of the uplands of eastern Kansas, built on the rich black loam of the prairie. To this place my parents had gone when there was nothing but the wide expanse of the prairie, with an occasional settler's house in view. My native State is Indiana, but I have always been glad I grew up in the West, where life was free and the horizon wide. The prairie is gone now and the landscape is that of prosperous farms. While my parents lived I never failed to go at least once a year to this little town, now overgrown with trees.

One morning on such an occasion I went to the schoolhouse where I had gone to school. The fence was gone which had surrounded the schoolyard, but everything else was about the same, even to the pile of ashes from the stoves. The same building was there, and not much changed from the days when I answered to the call of the same old bell. I crossed over to the ball diamond, upon which I had held down "first" on many a day of contest. As I stood there, memory reproduced many schoolday incidents and faces. I was alone now and the diamond was quiet enough. I went over to the elm tree my class had planted on our commencement day, a memorable day

in our lives and in that school. We planted this fine young elm on the south side near the east line of the spacious yard—everything is spacious in Kansas. How that day stood out in my memory as I walked over to the familiar spot! We had a committee to select the tree, and another to dig the hole, and another to make suitable speeches. The tree had prospered notwithstanding the excess of talk. It had become a great tree and spread its branches forth. The jolly company that initiated its life had dissolved, but the tree was waxing great.

Leaving the shade of my own tree, I walked to another part of the ground where some boys were playing marbles. We used to play marbles occasionally, but it was considered a tame sort of a game. I made some comment to the boys about their game, to which they paid no attention whatever. As I was moving away one of them said, "I wonder who that fellow is!" It was an illuminating remark. I was a stranger on my own playground! I was unknown where my victories had been won. I had no recognition under the shade of the tree I had planted! Children playing marbles from my old taw wondered who I was! I sauntered back up the street, feeling like some noted men must have felt when they "confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

12

TO RECOUNT THE MERCIES OF THE LORD

IN a late afternoon this summer I witnessed a scene that made a profound impression on me. I was in Plymouth, the old city of the Pilgrims. Learning there was to be a procession that reproduced a scene of those heroic days, I sought a position where I might witness it. It proved to be a reproduction of the hour of evening prayer in that embattled company. I heard the roll of the drum which was the call to prayer. From the replica of the "Common House," fifty men, women and children formed in line, led by the drummer boy. They were dressed in the style of that day. Walking abreast and leading the procession were three men impersonating Elder Brewster, Governor Bradford and Captain Miles Standish. With solemn mien this company made its way up Leyden Street, the original street of the settlement, named in honor of their city of refuge in Holland. The spirit and suffering of the Pilgrims seemed to be upon them. The men carried flintlock rifles and the women and children carried Bibles.

The site of the old fort was their objective, the ancient place to which the Pilgrims resorted for prayer. The company formed a hollow square on the spot where the fort had stood. People stood reverently while these Pilgrims worshipped. A prayer was offered. A hymn of the Pilgrims was sung, after which

an address was read, gleaned from the records of that day. It was an appeal for the Pilgrims to remember the goodness of God; to recount the mercies of the Lord. Another hymn was sung and the procession returned, their pageant-like lesson over. But we remained. It was a glorious day. From this site of the old fort I looked out over the water where the Mayflower dropped anchor and remained through the winter. That Mayflower has gone to sail in majesty the seven seas. In her place that day lay the President's yacht, another Mayflower, which by chance had dropped in for a tribute of respect. There lay Clark's Island, the Gurnet Headland, the hill across the bay where Miles Standish built his home. There was the wide sweep of the Cape just as it lay before the eyes of the Pilgrims when the fort was standing, when Leyden Street was a path in the wilderness, when the solemn mien was the result of suffering.

How conflicting are the emotions at such a time! How changed, and yet how unchanged! Gone are the Pilgrims and their children's children, yet the same tides of the ocean wash the same ancient rock upon which the Pilgrims' feet first stood. As I looked at the reminders of a day that is past, the markers, the stately monuments, and the wide sweep of the ocean, their words kept passing through my mind: "To recall the mercies of the Lord!" Is that not the secret of their strength? And does it not point out to us the way of success and peace?

13

LIGHTING A NEW WICK

THERE is something bewitching in a wick that is burning low; something deeply impressive in days or seasons that are ebbing. There is a mystical something in us which gives interest to the passing of the old year. In solemn silence we wait for it to go then turn with a welcome to the new. The closing of a five-year period in a pastorate takes on, at least to the pastor, a mystic, gripping significance. As the flame in the lamp of five years burns low, many thoughts come trooping as fugitives and companions of the shadowy hours of reminiscence. How strange it is that one often sees more clearly in the dim light of a failing wick than in the light of the sun.

There comes back to me, after these five years, the impressions of the beginning. I remember how strongly my friends urged on me the difficulties and dangers of this pastorate. I still have some of the letters that filled my mail-box offering advice and suggestion. But I remember, too, how the impression settled on me that this call was of God. Stories of difficulties have not often deterred me from following a road or a policy. It seems like yesterday the committee came to the Trenton manse after the morning service. Mr. Ligget was the spokesman and with him were Mr. Bradly, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Fleming. Then followed the visit to the field, the acceptance and

the installation. Then there was the year of beginnings, making new friends and grouping people for the ministry. It is always a time of anxiety; for making friends into whose hands you place your reputation and your ministry is anxious business. There was a generous response on the part of the community. Hundreds came confessing Christ and joining the life and ministry of the Church. Early in the pastorate shadows began to fall across the manse. After more than a year of anxiety the sorrows of death came over us, as they have over many other homes in the church in these five years. In such hours one comes to know the love of God and give a new rating to human sympathy. In such times friendships emerge as ranges in life.

During the past year we have been coming to bed rock in our building. It has been a time of stock-taking, a time for invoicing assets and liabilities. It was a good thing for David to take account of his forces, those who could keep step. The Church needs men today who can keep step. It is always a joy to turn from the meditations of the ebbing hours to the new day, from the burning out of one wick to the lighting of another. Like Abraham of old, let us set up a stone and call it " Jehovah Jireh, the Lord Will Provide," and turn our hearts to the new day.

14

THE STREAM OF BLESSING

EVERY stream has its source somewhere in the hills or mountains where springs gush out of hidden reservoirs. The stream flows as a matter of course because the reservoirs are in the mountains with their inexhaustible supply. The spring accounts for the mill-race and the eddy and the quiet, deep pools and the shady nooks where the fish dart in and out. It has been the task of explorers and geographers who have drawn the maps of the world to trace the rivers to their sources; to mark the tributaries and the watersheds. What a story is that of Speke, who followed the Nile so far into its African wilderness! And of Baker, who followed him and went still farther. And of Stanley, who completed their discoveries! The great river gave up its secrets which had so impressed the ancient Egyptians.

It is one thing to ferry across the tides of the Delaware as it flows past our city, and another thing to follow our wonderful river up through the Water Gap and on and on through the mountains and valleys to its sources. In our long wanderings this summer we followed many streams to their beginnings; beautiful, wonderful streams, giving life and hope on the way. They always came from some hidden source in the uplands. Who among us has not, in fancy at least, followed the great " Father of Waters " to his foun-

tainhead in beautiful little Itaska. There is always a hidden source, a secret reason for the flowing waters. It is God's way ordained for the fruitfulness of the land.

But there is another stream more wonderful than any that flows between fern-covered banks, where its waters throw back the images of trees or reflect the blue of the sky. It is the stream of blessings. We are all in one way or another carried upon its tides. I am wondering whether we have ever thought to follow that stream to its source! The Psalmist, a great spiritual geographer, wrote, "His mercy flows an endless stream." All the Spirit-filled men of the Bible trace the stream of blessing to the love of God. That is the upland from which every stream of blessing flows. It accounts for the mill-race and the quiet eddies and the shady nooks and the strong flow all along the way. When we have come to God's love we have reached the spring. What a wonderful flow that stream has! It brings prosperity to the factories, learning to the schools, discoveries to the laboratories, happiness to the homes along its way. The river of blessing flows from the love of God.

15

"WHICH WAY?"

IT was with vacation in mind that a friend said to me recently, "Which way this summer?" While vacation is very largely a state of mind, it has come also to be a matter of ways; for the vacationist travels the ways of the land and the paths of the ocean. The great highways are thronged by his sort. The hidden ways of the mountains are sought out by him. Even the country roads that lead in and out among quiet places are explored. Sometimes his path is short like the rivers of New Jersey, which run to the seashore and stop. His trail runs out on the Steel Pier or in the restless tide of the Boardwalk or on some piazza where the voices are not those of nature. Sometimes the path leads through wide spaces to the North, where forest-covered mountains shut the way in and lakes invite the traveler to linger. Here the trail seems to find no place to stop. It is longer than the allotted period. It outreaches the ability of any seven-league boots.

I have a friend who says he feels his best when he is on a Pullman with a ticket bound for somewhere. I do not share in that sort of exuberance. I think I feel my best, when my free time comes, to drop in behind the wheel of my trusty Buick and leisurely take my way with a congenial companion, not quite sure where we are going; not caring where night may

overtake us, and mildly indifferent to rain or sunshine. There are always some favorite roads that call us and some scenes to revisit. There are some brooks that are delightfully talkative and some woods that are cool and deep and mysterious. It is all so wonderful that the splendors of the out-of-doors are near us. Then there is Cape Cod. No one has really traveled the ways who has missed the land of the Pilgrims. It is a land now of the vacationist. The people are divided into two sorts up there, but most of them are vacationists. Lincoln writes of the others. But we do not forget the folks of the Mayflower. It is a privilege to stand on the ground sanctified by their devotion and suffering, look out on the water where the Mayflower lay and visit the monument erected in their honor.

When you lift up your eyes a bit in response to the question, "Which way this summer?" other ways appear which do not lead to the Steel Pier or to the mountains. There is the way of the upward calling, leading up through the Delectable Mountains; another way takes the lowlands. "Which way this summer?" is more than a question of four weeks or of six; it is a question of life. And do not forget Him as your Companion.

"For to every man there openeth a way and ways and a way,
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low;
But to every man there openeth a high way and a low,
And every man decideth the way his soul shall go."

16

"COME, SUP WITH ME"

THE words came over the telephone and were spoken in the cordial, affectionate tones of friendship. They lingered in my mind after the conversation closed something like the afterglow of an occasional sunset lingers in the sky. The influence upon me was immediate and gracious. These words are heavily freighted when you come to think about it. They carry an invitation on the surface. There are suggestions of common need and provision. But the words live in the atmosphere of friendship. She was asking me to join her family circle, to share the benefits of her home through an evening of companionship. It was like coming upon a lodge in the wilderness when the day is far spent. Her "Come, sup with me" awakened memories and stirred my best impulses. I remembered how a captain of a Great Lakes freighter asked two hungry boys to supper with him; and what a supper it was. I recalled many occasions when guests honored my father's board or my own. My mind returned to many a brookside or woodland where supper and fellowship were enjoyed under the open sky. Of course I accepted the invitation.

That friendly, "Come, sup with me," suggested the most wonderful invitation of all. How often in one form or another our Lord said it. On the shore of

Galilee He made a fire of coals and broiled fish and invited His friends to have supper with Him. And I remember how He is still saying, "I am at your door, knocking. If you will open the door I will come in and sup with you and you with Me!" If friendship is a well-spring in the wilderness, what is this? It is said the absence of friendship darkens the landscape with the sable shades of night; but to miss this companionship would be to walk in darkness over all life's way. Here is a cup of friendship without any degree or any bitterness. His invitation is hospitality set with gladness.

What is the Lord's Supper but His "Come, sup with Me"? It is a gracious invitation to have things in common with Him; we take His strength and He assumes our weakness. The high hour of any friendship is that of the supper table at the close of the day when we rest in each other's confidence and enjoy together life's benefits. Our friendships are revealed in the breaking of bread. The Lord's Supper is a high hour of friendship. As on another occasion, He is known to us in the breaking of bread. We discover the Christ as He ministers to us. For this reason and others He is saying, "Come, sup with Me."

17

KEEPING THE LIGHT IN DADDY'S EYES

THERE came into my hands a few days ago, through an intimate confidence, a letter that impressed and delighted me. It was a letter from a young woman to her father, written while she was detained from home. This absence gave her an opportunity to appraise her home life and measure its influence. This letter states in affectionate terms her conclusions. She pays without stint the debt she owes to her father in the only sort of coin that has value in the realm of the human heart. And she was giving a new strength to her father for the tasks which fall to him; she was rekindling the glow of youth in his heart. I asked the privilege of quoting a paragraph of this letter for you for its leavening influence and because she belongs to a generation against which much has been written and spoken.

"Dearest Dad—I want you to have a note from me Saturday, so I will get it written tonight. I guess I will not be able to write you often from now on until I get home. You will forgive me for that, won't you? I enjoyed your letter a lot. Bless your heart, Dad, you are a dear! It is no wonder mother fell in love with you. I love you a lot, too. I am afraid you have spoiled me, for I measure every man I meet by you and I find them small in comparison. You will never know how much I appreciate you and mother. My

prayer is that I may be as good as you are, as square and honest. Not many girls have a dad who is such a good sport, one to whom they can go and talk everything over. You are a pal to me as well as a father and I love you for it. I have been blessed with an exceptional father and mother. Be good, Dad. Lots of love."

All the customs and usages of life have slipped their moorings in the past twenty years. Young people of this generation dress differently and deport themselves differently from those of the past. I am persuaded they have the same idealism. If there is a fault, and I believe three is, it rests with the home conditions. Perhaps there has been less change in young people than with other phases of life. If we occupy the point of view of the past and evaluate young people of today from it, we will likely judge them harshly and unjustly. They will not understand such judgment and on their part will likely condemn their elders as narrow and unsympathetic. The home to which this father and daughter belong has solved the problem. It is the only way.

18

"MY FATHER"

THERE is something very precious and very satisfying in these words. I can scarcely conceive a higher sense of possession than they express. It indicates the place God means the father to occupy in human life. He is the protector of the home, a shield in the hour of danger. He is the guardian of the interests of those committed to his care. He meets the outer world for his loved ones and receives into his person the shock of unfriendly conditions. By his labor he provides food and shelter; it is his responsibility. He deals at first hand with the difficult things of the world and most of what he asks in return is appreciation. Ingratitude within the home hurts him, if he is real, more than any injury the world can inflict. Jesus taught us to call God "Our Father." That places a high rating on your father and mine.

Some of the strongest spiritual impressions of my youth came from my father. He was a pioneer by nature and in fact. The country was new and there were many hardships. Life was not along a beaten highway. It was a country where the paths seemed to run out and stop. Resources never seemed to be at hand. Difficulties were always overtopping every situation. It was often a question of bare hands against the wilderness. Voices were always saying, "There's no sense in going further." But the pioneer

spirit believed there was something farther on. It was a great privilege I had as a boy watching my father find that something. I had the consciousness that he was always going before. I am willing to speak so because the picture is that of your father as well as of mine.

I have always thought of my father as excelling in spiritual qualities. He was always urging higher taxes for schools. He called the meeting for the organization of a church and pledged an amount for its support that made us wonder where it was to come from. His comment was, "I think we will get it somewhere." There was an indefinable something about his rugged comradeship that was determining. I wanted to be with him. An appeal to truth got his instant attention. Forgiveness was freely given if wrong was confessed. There was a refuge for both body and spirit in my father's house. His old chair was marked by his posture in devotion as he knelt night and morning claiming the covenant and pleading the mercies of God. More to me than college or seminary is the memory of his steadfast life in humble but difficult places at times; and the memory of his voice in prayer.

19

SPEAKING WITHOUT KNOWING

THE ride over the Allegheny mountains, on a recent trip, was exceptionally pleasant. The day was one of the loveliest May affords. The train was a majestic creation of steel drawn by three great engines. It sped across the wonderful fields of Lancaster. It followed the winding course of the Juniata in and out among the mountains. It climbed the heavy grade up the face of the mountain without pause or hesitation. That great train showed form and grace as it swung around the Horseshoe Curve and reached for the summit beyond. The valleys lay far beneath us and the panorama from the window was indeed beautiful.

Going down the mountain the train was in a different mood. The country was different. The trees and the mountain brooks were different. That tunnel had a bad effect on both the train and country. I had gone forward into the dining-car for supper. Presently a husband and wife sat opposite to me. She had a sharp face and, as I felt, a will to scold. He spoke but twice during the meal. Addressing me, she said: "We went to a lot of trouble to get the Pennsylvania, but I think it is just awful." We were going down the mountain at fifty or more miles an hour. The man in the engine had the train in perfect control as he led it in and out of the defiles of the western slope. I had

not answered her first remark. Now she added: "I never saw anything like it. Henry Ford's road that goes by our place in Ohio is a real railroad." She was looking at me, thinking of Henry Ford and trying to pour coffee. Meanwhile the engineman was doing his duty by the schedule over one of the crookedest but best built pieces of road in America. She ought to have kept her mind on the curves and her eye on the coffee. As it was, she poured some of her coffee in the cup, some in her husband's hashed brown potatoes, but more on the white expanse of the tablecloth. When she discovered what she had done, she snapped, "That engineer doesn't know his business."

I looked across at her husband and was moved with compassion. I thought of other people who are disturbed by the swing of the train but forget the wonderful road. She missed the beauties of the day, the wonderful performance of that train, the enjoyment of a really fine supper courteously served. I was not surprised when she produced a first-aid kit and got a capsule of large dimensions which she made him take to ward off indigestion. I did not understand why she did not take it herself. I was still wondering about it and other things like it when I discovered we were drawing into the environs of Pittsburgh.

20

FINDING HER WAY

NO study is more interesting than the story of the Church of Christ. It has every interest that life and love can give to any narrative. Any failure of the Church is always tragic; her success is always glorious because of the results attending in human life. Her success adds to, and her failure takes from life. Nothing is clearer than this in the pages of history. Christ meant this should be, for in a very real way the Church is the equivalent of Christ in the world. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." That wonderful mission is inseparable from the success of life on the one hand or from its failure on the other. In that mission the Church has been finding her way, sometimes walking in confidence and sometimes in fear; sometimes in the light and again groping in the dark.

The Church has always been beset by difficult problems, for she is not going in a circle but on a mission. A great and new problem arose in Antioch concerning the Jewish rites and ceremonies. Should Christians observe the Jewish ceremonial law? The question was far-reaching, for on the one hand the Christian Church was free from Judaism. On the other hand, it was only a branch of Judaism and its membership must be recruited from those willing to observe Jewish ceremonialism. It was hotly debated at Antioch and then

referred to the Council at Jerusalem. This was the first great Christian council. Missions are always creating new problems. Dead churches have no problems, but live churches always have problems. This missionary Church at Antioch gave the Church her first great problem. The decision of the council was favorable to Christian liberty. It pointed out that salvation depends wholly on faith in Christ and was in no sense dependent on observance of the ceremonial law. The Council enjoined the parties holding such divergent views to live together in concord and in the great central truth. Other things do not matter much. That decision brought joy to the missionary churches throughout the world.

So the Church has been finding her way. But there is a promise that where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, He will be in the midst. That promise has to do with just such matters. Then there is the promise of the Spirit. The Church is definitely led if it will be led. There can be no doubt of the Spirit's leadership in the minds of those who are willing to follow. All this is in mind because of our own General Assembly this week and her problems.

21

WEAVERS OF LIFE!

ONE of the nights I shall always remember was a night of my boyhood. It was a cold, stormy night in winter. The wind was sweeping across the plains, driving the blinding snow. Drifts were rising higher and higher as the storm increased, and fine snow came sifting through the window casements. Father had gone away on a business trip and would not be home until the morrow. The family was gathered in the dining-room, the warmest room in the house. A big stove showed cherry red in the dim light of the single oil lamp. It was still early when mother took the old Family Bible and opened it across her lap. She read several familiar portions and then we knelt about her chair and she offered a prayer that sunk into my memory. Not the storm nor the cold, but the prayer has made that night memorable. She had made most of the clothing we had on. She prepared the food we ate. Some things she could not do for her family and well she knew it; but she knew where to go for that which she could not do. No, I shall never forget her prayer. Just now there came to me a beautiful and significant letter from one of our Ninth Church women which I wish to quote.

"In these days of the new woman, the business woman and the woman that wishes to be a real woman," she writes, "it is quieting to the nerves and

pacifying to the old-fashioned sentiment which still lurks in the heart of many women to recall Ruskin's question: 'What do you think the beautiful word wife comes from?' It is a great word in which the English and Latin languages conquer the French and the Greek. I hope the French will some day find a word for it instead of their 'femme.' But what do you think it comes from? The great value of the Saxon words is that they mean something. Wife means weaver. Woman must be either housewife or housemoth; remember that. In the deep sense women either weave men's fortunes and embroider them, or feed upon them. Wherever a true wife comes, home is always around her. The stars may be over her head, the glow-worm in the night's cold grass may be the fire at her feet, but home is where she is and, for a noble woman, is stretched far around her. It is better than houses ceiled with cedar or painted with vermillion, shedding its quiet light for those who are homeless. This, I believe, is the woman's true place and power."

If she fails, the home is unutterably cheated. I am inexpressibly glad to remember that my mother knew I prized her ministry and her weaving of character.

22

HAVE YOU HEARD IT?

I HEARD a conversation on a recent Sunday morning after the service. Conversations between earnest folks are always interesting. But this conversation was not between folks; it was between the two Pockets of the Church Envelope. The voices came distinctly from the collection plates. These Pockets, like people, have much in common. If one Pocket is permanently empty the other will become insolvent at no distant day. They succeed or fail together. One is for Church Support and one is for Church Benevolence. But Church Support must arise out of Benevolence or the Church loses its mission. The other Pocket is for Benevolence; but any Benevolence that does not take care of home needs is wrong in heart and has no reservoir higher up. These two Pockets have a common motive and a common purpose.

The first to speak was a Church Support Pocket. "Have you any funds that belong to me today?" The question was addressed to a Benevolence Pocket. Each was to give account shortly to the Treasurer. The Benevolence Pocket replied, "I have a dollar bill, but it was given to me for the missionary work of the Church. And, dear me, I need this dollar." But the Church Support Pocket replied, "I think some of that dollar belongs to me, for I have nothing today. No Giver would destroy missionary work by not support-

ing the Church that supports the missionaries! " So the Pockets could not agree and there was confusion in the Collection Plate. Another voice was heard. It was saying in a hesitating sort of way, " I am stuffed full of old envelopes and have nothing for my treasury but worthless paper." It was a Benevolence Pocket speaking and the Church Support Pocket on the same envelope replied, " I, too, hold only empty envelopes and someone has torn off my number and I have no way of telling who I am." Then up spoke two other Pockets. One said, " I have a dollar," and the other, " I have five." But when they reached in for the money they were both confused, for neither had anything. They tried in an empty sort of way to say that the money had slipped out on the Plate; but there was no evidence to bear out the explanation.

Then I looked up and saw two men standing beside a table. They had heard the voices of the Pockets and were concerned about the confusion in the Collection Plate. They were weighing evidence and reaching conclusions. They were the treasurers. One of them said, " I wonder what these Givers really meant to do? " And I wondered too.

23

"I SHALL GO TO HIM"

DEATH is a departure from the scenes and activities of this earthly life. There is no justification in Scripture for the belief that our beloved dead remain near us and share with us in measure our joys and sorrows. Nor does such an idea find justification in reason. Their work is done, their earthly career ended. The evening bell that called them from their earthly task does not call them to a weird, vague life. It calls to something better. Just as truly as life is a departure, it is also an arrival. We are not dismissed at death into a cheerless void, but we are guided home by an unerring convoy. Death is chiefly an arrival, however that arrival may be obscured by earthborn clouds. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." Even the silence of Jesus makes sure the realization of our highest hopes that death is a wonderful arrival, an arrival at God's home which is also ours.

This great Christian truth lay in the mind of David in the day of his sorrow. The household was disconcerted at the quietness of the king in the hour of his son's death. For he had arisen from his grief, gone to the house of the Lord for worship and returned to take up the routine of life. When his servants asked him for an explanation he made the great pronouncement, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to

me." It is in keeping with the spirit of all Scripture. It is a truth that gives strength to arise from grief and to assume the duties of life. It puts a ban on unseemly sorrow and fills the mind with joyous anticipations of a spiritual reality that passeth understanding.

It answers, too, the question of recognition in heaven. That is a gracious truth directly underlying this statement. We lose no spiritual value or faculty in the processes of death. We are "clothed upon" with immortality. An old friend once asked me to go to him when he knew his end was near. He was a friend beloved, whose heart had been won to Christ by a little child. That child grew to youth, and in the midst of great earthly promise sickened and died. It seemed a mystery past understanding, but we do not have to understand all God's providences. When I sat beside the bed of my sick friend he said to me, "I am going soon! Do you want to send a message to the boy?" I had never thought of it before, but of course I sent the message. And I am sure it was delivered.

24

THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE!

IT is a rare privilege to be present when a human soul declares fealty to Jesus Christ! It is an event that time does not efface. Some sort of a record is kept in the church, another record is written deep in the confessing soul, and God, we are told, makes still another record in heaven. Thus is the family of God extended and bound together. Recently a young man made a wonderful impression on the Session at his enrolment among the friends of Jesus. He had accepted Jesus as his Saviour and had declared his reliance on Him. Then followed the inevitable question, "And do you receive Him also as your King?" There followed the clear, definite answer, "I do." There was no uncertainty or equivocation. The spiritual quality in his decision quickened the pulse. When the King came asking for the heart of this young man it was definitely given.

How often is it otherwise! Jesus came to His own chosen people. He took an old prophecy with which they were very familiar and put Himself into it. When He came riding into Jerusalem as the prophet said Messiah would come, they remembered the prophecy and recognized the claim He was making. But their eyes were blinded by the glamour of paganism and their hearts fettered by prejudice. As He made His way through the streets the question arose on every

side, "Who is this?" The scholar, familiar with the prophets; the Pharisee, holding tenaciously to his accretions; the Sadducee, skeptical and unbelieving; the Roman, the Herodian, and people of the underworld, frankly uninterested in things spiritual; these were all attracted by the strange spectacle and were asking the question! The voice that prevailed was the unspiritual voice. His claim was rejected and He was sent to the cross. How different that answer to the one we heard from the young man whose better nature and whose finest aspirations answered the appeal of Christ in the affirmative!

We cannot escape the question! It is true of every rational mortal, "Thy King cometh unto thee!" He rides through the city of the soul and the voices within cry out as did the voices of Jerusalem, "Who is this?" Some voice must answer. Belief, or skepticism, or Phariseeism, or mammonism must be given the franchise of your soul! And results, life's great results, accompany and flow from that decision. Jerusalem became a city desolate, God-forsaken. But no man who joins himself unto this King shall ever be desolate.

25

LET US REMEMBER

PRESBYTERIANISM is a system of sound doctrine. The foundation on which it rests is the Scriptures. The Westminster Assembly, which formulated the system, looked nowhere else for authority on doctrine. In patience and prayer and with the light the best scholarship could give, this assembly formulated the historic Confession. For five and a half years they labored at the task assigned to them by Parliament. There were 121 ministers, 11 members of the House of Lords, 20 from the House of Commons and 7 commissioners from Scotland. A rule of the Assembly was, "What a man undertakes to prove he shall make good out of the Scriptures." It was a distinguished company drawn from the churches and universities. This system of doctrine was not intended to take the place of the Scriptures, but rather to throw light upon it. Not to limit, but to lift and stabilize thinking, is the function of any creed that is at all worthy of the human mind. It is not a fence to keep thought in, but a stairway to carry the mind up.

Presbyterianism is more than a system of sound doctrine. It is a well defined system of orderly procedure. This is so clearly emphasized that it gives us our name. Presbyterianism is a great constitutional institution. In the formulation of American institutions the constitution of the Presbyterian Church

played an important part. It has been the martyr church of history. It has resisted the tyranny of spiritual autocracy on the one hand and the voice of popular passion on the other. It is a stable institution of spiritual justice. As truly as any American may claim his rights as an American, a Presbyterian may claim his rights as a Presbyterian. With the safeguarding of rights, definite provision is made for the safeguarding of doctrine.

With great wisdom our founders joined the system of sound doctrine and the system of sound government together. They have come to us through the centuries. To separate them would be to destroy both ultimately. The man who would change our Confession must do so lawfully. The man who is accused must be accused lawfully. A vote of the General Assembly may be swayed by passion or by ignorance. The orderly procedure of the Presbyterian Church is far removed from any such vote. Our fathers died for the rights which were written into our Constitution. The time may again come when we will be glad of their guarantees.

26

HAVE YOU SHUT THE DOOR?

HYPOCRITES in the days of Grecian ascendancy were actors. They played the parts in the comedies and tragedies of the great amphitheatres and were important people in their day. But Jesus disallowed the place of the actor in things spiritual. "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites." He put the ban on pretense. But He went farther than the purely negative, as He always does. He stressed the need of being alone and quiet with God. The closet with the shut door is far removed from the street corner and the blaring trumpet. One thinks of His own hours on the mountaintop when the door of night shut Him in with God; the noise of the world hushed; the silent stars shedding their dim light; the night winds soughing through the olive trees.

It is not easy to shut the door as Jesus meant it. The world has a way of following, with its confusion, into any closet the soul may choose. Jerome said the world followed him to his retreat in the wilderness. Our self-will, our prejudices, our emotions of all sorts, acquired from the world, follow us doggedly. Contention and bitterness beat upon the door; it is hard to shut them out! If they come in, the world is in with all its confusion. The shut door means the soul alone with God. The ear is closed to all voices but God's. The heart overflows in the soul's acceptance of His

redeeming love. The will owes fealty to no other lordship than His. It is the soul's supreme hour when, with the help of God, the door of which Jesus spoke is shut. Then the heart, as an attuned radio, is silent to all the voices that disturb the ether but the voice of God; the heart in tune with the Infinite.

Friends coming into the city often call me from the toll booth at the station. The booth is made of heavy wood and is provided with double doors that the one speaking may shut himself away from the confusion of the station. A few days ago such a friend did not close the door and I could hear the clang of bells, the labor of engines and the hum of voices. The company's provision for us to be alone was not being utilized because he did not shut the door. His conversation was obscured by the announcement of trains and confusion of the station. God is asking you, for your sake, to close the door. However wise the voices of the world they, with the prattle of the foolish, should be shut out. It is your hour with God and God's with you.

27

ARE YOU A SPECTATOR IN THE CHURCH?

THE Church of Christ offers something of a spectacle to those who set themselves to observe. Things are being done, things wise and things foolish. It has been so from the beginning. The really determining events of communities and nations happen in the churches; it may be in very humble churches. The worship of God is in itself of supreme importance. As a spectacle it is unique. The appointments are usually well ordered. Responsible men graciously meet the worshippers and look after their comfort. Duly appointed officers take care of externals. The choirmaster prepares suitable music. Ordained men conduct the worship and preach the Gospel. There is the spectacle of religious education with a tremendous, never ending task. It has afforded tragedy, comedy, failure, victory. In the department of young people the interest never lags. Here the task is baffling, undefined and nearly always badly staged.

But the greatest spectacle for any observer to witness is the winning of a soul to Christ. It attracts even the angels of God! Not ushering, not preaching, not occupying a seat in the Session, not rendering music, but winning men to Christ is the great exploit. It is the ministry of reconciliation in operation. It affords the explanation of Christ. Other tasks are

merely incidental. If this is neglected, others are in vain.

It must be wonderful to watch from some disinterested point of view the happenings in the Church. But is it worth while? The Church is the body of Christ, and every member is a member in particular, as Paul says. Some function is entailed because of membership in the body. The member that fails to function weakens the body. Besides there is no Scripture authorizing any Christian to be a spectator in the great contest. Grandstand seats are not in the specifications of the Church. "What wilt thou have me to do?" was the second question the great Christian asked in the hour of his conversion. He was not disobedient to the great commission. It is the secret of power. The faces of unsaved friends passing over memory makes the Christian task clear. A spectator is essentially a critic. It is impossible for the man in the grandstand not to criticize the man in the field who fumbles the ball. Not the man in service who is doing the work of ten is at fault for any failure, but the nine who are spectators.

28

BUTTER AND BENEVOLENCE

IT all came out at our breakfast table. I remember so well that we had cakes that morning, served with butter and maple syrup. We had for our guest a friend who was on her way home after a visit to one of our mission schools in Kentucky, where her daughter, who had graduated from Vassar, was a teacher. Our friend is a strong supporter of missions as one might suppose from the fact that Jean is teaching in a mission school and her son is in preparation for service as a medical missionary. They are all she has. When Jean received the appointment to teach, she was so delighted that she forgot to ask what salary was attached to the position; she accepted the service and returned home without knowing what her salary was to be.

Our visitor was enthusiastic about the mission school, and the girls gathered there from the villages and the cabins of the mountains. She had fallen in love with the girls and told us much of what was being done for them. But a few questions brought out some things that she had not spoken about. For instance, it is necessary to keep the table expenses down to an average of eight cents a meal for each person. To do this requires the strictest economy at every point; and butter cannot be provided for either the teachers or the girls. I got this information while I was spread-

ing good butter on a hot cake. And somehow what she said took a bit of the relish away from that well-buttered cake. I felt, too, that she was thinking of the girls and their butterless breakfast.

So it happened that the unwelcome word "apportionment" came unexpectedly to our breakfast table. Why was there no butter for Jean and her fellow-teachers and all those splendid girls? Butter is not included in the budget and therefore is not part of the apportionment. Butter is not on their end of the table and the Church just will not pass it to them. We at home have butter! The Church has butter! It seemed to me as I sat there and thought about it that I just must pass the butter to that school and all the other mission schools. It is simply a question of apportionment. And we don't like apportionments! But when we think about it, it is just passing the butter or some other needful thing. It is sharing intelligently and lovingly what we have.

29

"THERE IS ALWAYS TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH!"

THE statement was made to me by a friend who gave it as a reason for remaining out of the Church. He believed he was saying something which justified his course. He believes in Jesus, but discounts heavily the Church which Jesus founded and commissioned. The faults of the Church are most clearly seen by those who are doing the tasks assigned to the Church and who are responsible for her nurture. Men do not remain aloof from families, yet there never has been an ideal family except in poetry and fiction. The application of the principle would estop all effort in every line of service. The Church is not an abstract body of perfect beings. Her members are people with prejudices and bad tempers and bad judgment and all that, but folks for whom Christ died.

It is an old story. In Paul's church at Philippi, Euodias and Syntyche had rival plans for the Ladies' Aid and they were disrupting the church by their arguments. It must have been very damaging, for Paul wrote and besought them to get together. Prominent men in another church made shipwreck of faith. It was disconcerting, but these leaders on the shoals were no argument against the Church. In Corinth the church was split over whether a Christian might go

into the public market and buy meat for his table without disloyalty to Christ. Modernism broke out in another church and spiritualized the resurrection. Paul called attention to the harm the babblers were doing and kept on building churches. He made note of a defection led by Phygellus and Hermogenes. In the important church of Ephesus a man by the name of Diotrephes aspired to leadership without spiritual qualifications. He so longed for preëminence that he ignored the Apostle John. So the story runs in the New Testament, not to speak of the Old, and has continued to run ever since.

But I have always had the comforting notion that our Lord foresaw all this. Satan tempts good men to remain aloof from the Church because of human weaknesses; for the same reason Christ urges good men to enlist in the Church for service. Mistakes look worse in the Church than anywhere else. Hypocrisy becomes evident only when it crawls out of the world into the Church. On the background of the high aspirations of men and the moral beauty of Christ it is seen for what it is. People who are looking for a Utopian church will never find it on earth. With the sympathy, patience and charity of Christ, let us carry on in His own organization.

30

WILL YOU HELP?

THAT we are in a period of great religious depression is everywhere evident. Congregations are depleted and interest in the distinctive Gospel message is at low ebb. A news syndicate recently carried the indictment that fewer people are going to church than at any time in our history; that scoffing at religious beliefs and practices has become general; that women are becoming more irreligious; that juvenile delinquency is on the increase; that in the war between religion and jazz, religion is losing out. Alongside of this indictment is published the fact that $2,650,000,000 was taken in hold-ups last year; that $6,000,000,000 was taken in stock swindling schemes; that $100,000,000 was lost in forgeries by trusted employees; that the cost of crime is greater than the annual budget of the nation and is growing.

The situation is a challenge to every person with a real interest in Christ's Church. It calls for heart-searching on the part of Christians. It banishes from the minds of earnest men boasting and recrimination. It is a situation that wrings the heart of every true minister of the Gospel. He sees the general condition manifesting itself in his congregation. Pews are vacant and he knows that the people who should have been in them were at business on Saturday and expected to be on Monday. Officers who are under ordi-

nation vows remain away from the services on slight pretexts. Some justify their absence by saying they listened to a wonderful sermon and beautiful music over the radio.

Every pastor who knows human life knows he could fill his pews by adopting the jazz policy and dispensing jazz religion. He also knows, if he knows the Gospel, that the latter end of that policy is worse than the first. He would have sold his spiritual birthright and his church's mission for a mess of jazz pottage. Nor can the church compete with the concert hall. The churches having the best of music suffer along with those having the poorest. The only real drawing power the church has is the Gospel. Those responsible for the welfare of the church these trying days should be in every possible service and should urge others to follow their example. Out of generations of experience that has been adopted as the Presbyterian way to obtain church attendance, power and efficiency. Officers and heads of departments are charged with responsibility. The minister has his task, but not less has every officer and member.

31

DESERTED

IT was in the summer of 1919 that Dr. and Mrs. George W. Montgomery, of Pittsburgh, persuaded us to go with them to Rock Ledge Cottage, their summer home in the Canadian wilderness. He had built the cottage with his own hands, taking a number of summers for the task. It stands on a great rock ledge on the west side of and overlooking Kahshee Lake. This lake has a shore line of thirty-five miles, yet it is so irregular that one is never out of reach of a jutting headland or a rocky island. What a delightful summer that was! We visited almost every island, built fires and broiled fish. We saw the porcupines waddling about in a constant "state of preparedness." We experienced the Canadian storms and listened to the cold rain splashing on the roof. We saw the wonder of the Northern Lights. We sat about the old sheet-iron stove reading and telling stories while the storm spent itself. With us were Dr. and Mrs. Walker, of McKeesport. He was a gentleman of the old school; a bit too much of a fisherman for me, but a man after Dr. Montgomery's own heart.

The last day of our stay at Kahshee we went down in the motor-boat to what is known as Deep Bay. At the end of this arm of the lake was a deserted sawmill. The saws, engine and tools were there just as the workmen had left them. Nearby was an old cottage.

It was closed and the shades were drawn. The outbuildings were empty. There was not a sign of life. A family had lived there, but the children grew up and went out into the world. By and by the old man lost his wife. Then one day some people visiting the place found him dead, lying on the floor. We entered the house. The living-room was in order. A hair-cloth lounge was against the wall. A cheap but clean carpet covered the floor. The beds were made. The kitchen utensils were hanging in place. The fire in the kitchen range had burned out after his last meal. A plate was on the table.

We closed the door and left without much to say. I dare say each was busy with his own thoughts. I noticed a furtive tear coursing down Juliet's face. For my own part I was thinking of that deserted house in spiritual terms. The throbbing words of Jesus kept returning, " And now your house is left unto you desolate." Life without God is like that. So we made our way back through a storm that had come up, drenched from the heavens above and the lake beneath.

32

CALLED CHRISTIANS AT ANTIOCH

THE followers of Jesus were called Christians first in Antioch. That is the name by which they were known in the wonder-working days; a name suitable and fitting, acceptable alike to the Church and the Spirit. But now followers of Jesus are known by so many other names that the ancient name is falling into disuse. These modern names are intended to reveal, but they really obscure discipleship. It is all very confusing to the man on the street. In Antioch the issue was definite. A Christian was one who believed in Jesus and consorted with the Church. The content of the name Christian is clear; no one can mistake it. There is no scar of factionalism across it. Modern names are seamed with factionalism and they have the content which any user may give them. There is no sadder spectacle to spiritual eyes than this presents. Followers of Jesus behind the breastworks of a factional name fulminate broadsides against those behind other and similar breastworks. And Christ is obscured and misrepresented.

Denominational lines used to mark the limits of redemption in denominational thinking. My father was a Covenanter, my mother a member of the Associate Church. Neither of these bodies allowed their members to attend the services of other groups of Christians. And because he, in his courtship, went to

church with her, he was subjected to church discipline. I am wondering if we are coming back to that sort of spirit, a spirit which paralyzed the energy and stifled the testimony of the Church. Jesus rebuked it in John; for John had forbidden certain people to use the name of Jesus because they followed not John's company.

Christianity is intolerant of partisanship. Christ is not and cannot be divided. The powers of darkness have ever sought to separate Christians and divide the Church. Paul severely rebuked the factional spirit in a contemporary church. "Is Christ divided?" he asked. He declared the names by which they were so zealously called were without merit. Even the name of Christ used factionally is futile. There have always been evils in the Church; evils due to ignorance and human frailties. But the Spirit of God has a way of dealing with these. But factionalism and phariseeism seem to estop the gracious operations of the Spirit, in whose dispensation we are! It was a great thing Paul said to the Romans: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

33

"I WILL OBSERVE THE SABBATH"

ONE summer afternoon, in my boyhood, a neighbor came to consult my father. It was harvest time and our great billowy fields were white unto the harvest; but our machines were silent, for it was Sunday. The situation was critical, for the wheat was falling and the acreage was large. The neighbor had come in to counsel with my father about starting his machines Sunday afternoon. I heard his statement and was impressed by the need of saving the harvest. But I remember still the thrill I had when I heard my father say without any hesitation, "I will observe the Sabbath!" With a true perspective he pointed out that he could get along some way without the harvest, if necessary, but the country could not get along without the Sabbath. He went on to say that he had never lost anything by that observance.

This is one of the important questions before our civilization. The fourth commandment lies in the body of the moral law and cannot be taken out. That law requires that the seventh day, after six of labor, should be kept holy, separate, different. There is no reference in it to any particular day of the week. The word sabbath is an adjective as used in the commandment and means rest! It has to do with the civil Sabbath which is a part of the moral law. It becomes the duty of the state, therefore, to protect it from

commercialization. It is the institution that stands beween humanity and the deadly grind of seven-day work. If the civil Sabbath is broken down, then we are at the mercy of mammon. I cannot but deeply resent the powerful moving-picture industry's attempt to break down this great moral institution for the sake of its own coffers. The civil Sabbath is written in the heart and flesh of humanity as well as in the decalogue; and God has made no mistake in the proportion of six days of labor and the seventh of rest! We have a right to ask the state to protect this institution that saves men and women from grasping commercialism.

The religious observance of the Sabbath is quite another matter. That is not a matter of law, but of conscience. Christian people not only stop their toil in the harvest field, but they betake themselves to worship and service of a spiritual sort. The civil Sabbath is negative. The Sabbath of the Christian is positive. But if the civil Sabbath is destroyed, the Christian has nothing to build on.

34

THE SCAR IN THE SNOW

AS I write we are speeding through a landscape obscured with a deep blanket of snow. The car window affords a moving picture of great interest. The pines, with their burden of snow, are more beautiful than Christmas trees because less artificial. The fields have been tucked in under snowy coverlets for a bit of winter rest to await the call of the spring morning. Only an occasional living creature comes into view; someone called by a duty that a snowy landscape does not dissolve, or some disconsolate animal moving aimlessly through the white fields. From the car window we see the attempts of cities to carry on; banks of dirty snow and ribbons of bare street attract the attention. The train soon leaves the cities behind and we are enveloped in a landscape of snow.

In the late forenoon we stood on the summit of a beautiful cemetery in Washington. What an attractive spot it is! The capitol city lay beneath us. Washington monument lifted itself above the horizon. Some splendid white oak trees stood nearby, their craggy arms ladened with snow. In our midst was an ugly scar in the snow. It was a new grave, made since the snow had ceased to fall; a grave to which we had come with a precious tenant. The yellow clay was in striking contrast to the crystal whiteness of the landscape. I thought as I turned away that I had never before seen such an ugly scar as that scar in the snow.

But how little difference it makes whether snow is covering the ground or a sward of green; whether snow is in the bosom of the oaks or leaves garland their branches. The grave makes a scar. However beautiful it may be by artifice, it is a scar to the eye and the heart. That snowy day there came to me anew that broken confession of a strong father, a confession of helplessness. He had a boy, a fine, manly chap. This father and son were pals, as all fathers and sons should be. But one day the boy was snatched away and the father in his helplessness cried: "I could not close this gap for him!" It had been his joy to close gaps for his son; but here was one he could not close. But there is One who can close the gap! As we look more closely and correct our perspective, the scar turns out to be a door. It was left ajar once and through that open door we discovered the gap closed, the chasm bridged.

35

THE IRRETRIEVABLE PAST: THE WAITING FUTURE!

THE passing of the old year has always stirred the imagination. It stirs the old and young, pagan and Christian. Its going has called forth wonderful figures and comparisons. It is like a ship that has cast off her mooring and withdrawn the gangplank, over which she held relations with city and country, and is moving away through swirling waters that swiftly widen. We know as we watch that she will never return. She goes beyond the reach of any searching expedition; beyond the call of the wireless or the pulsing waves of the radio! She will never put in at any other human port! What a mystery is time! The year has been with us in beautiful forms and wonderful experiences, in friendships and service, but on the stroke of the hour it begins to dissolve. Its experiences take shadowy form and fade out of life. The year is irretrievable! But the future is the ship coming in! It is the opening day. It is opportunity poising.

This is all set out in one of the strangest statements Jesus ever made. It is the real meaning of the statement, although it is found between the lines. On the night of the betrayal He had asked the disciples to watch and pray with Him during the terrible hour. But while He was in that awful mortal agony they

went to sleep. He awoke them and asked them to watch with Him while His soul was meeting the great moral problem of the world! But they slept. He suffered alone until the smoking torches of the band led by Judas appeared. Then He awoke them the third time and said calmly enough, "Sleep on now and take your rest. Rise up, let us go." Poising opportunity had taken flight. The ship had cast loose from her moorings and was off. The hour was irretrievably lost! "Sleep on now!" But there is a new hour, a new opportunity! As He faced that new hour He said, "Rise up, let us go!"

That is a great scene in the dark wood. Why were their hearts not melted by His appeal for help? Why did He not turn from them as unworthy the great gift He had to give? I think the answer is in the fact that they were very human and He the Strong Son of God! But how like that scene life is! We are forever sleeping while pregnant hours go by. The Saviour is still saying to disciples who have the film of sleep over their eyes, "Rise up, let us go!" Now that the old year has gone, let us hear that word, "Rise up, let us go," with respect to the new!

36

MY CHRISTMAS CARDS

HOW they came in companies and squads! Every time the postman opened the door they came crowding in, declaiming and singing, offering advice, good wishes and prayers. Sometimes they came through bright, and sometimes like the angels, through "cloven skies." I believe I never before really prized Christmas cards. I have seldom selected or commissioned them. I have gone away from counters on which they were displayed with a feeling that they were standardized; made like the parts of an automobile to fit any machine. My friendships are individualistic. Then they seemed to be in a contest in the use of superlatives; and that is out of keeping with Christmas.

But I have surrendered to the Christmas cards. I was not conscious of any change of opinion concerning them and their faults and the counters on which they were displayed. Yet I opened each with keen interest. They came from friends who always send me some message at Christmas; members of Ninth Church and other churches I have served. There were cards from unexpected sources bringing messages equally unexpected. Some bore the unpracticed hand of childhood; others the wavering lines of age, the firm hand of business or the shaded signature of culture. They were high-priced and low-priced. Some were works

of art, exquisitely wrought; others were ordinary. Some were impish; a few were original. They came to me from cities, hamlets and countryside throughout the whole land. They brought to me the breath of the mountains, the charm of the city and the wide horizon of the plains. But there was something else, undefined, that came along.

I turned to myself for a reason for the new interest in this old custom. I had not long to search; I found it in a new evaluation of friendship, a new dependence on friends. I have always valued friendship; but new emphasis comes at times, giving a new rating to old things. The thought in the heart of my friend here, there and everywhere in appropriating the sentiment of the card and making it his message, spread the glow of friendship over the season. It is a compensation of the pastorate; for friendships are not terminated at any official boundary. Friendship gives meaning and beauty to all things. And I remember that Jesus said, "I have called you friends. Ye are my friends." My Christmas cards sent me to Him.

37

WHO IS SANTA CLAUS?

WHOEVER he is he must be someone pretty nice, for he is very popular among the little folks; and they usually know. I have a little friend who recently passed her fourth birthday and she has much wisdom. Her questions and her points of view are often the wonder of her parents. She has ideas about grown-up things. I called this little friend to me recently and asked her, "Who is Santa Claus?" Without any hesitation she answered, "He is the one who brings us toys and nuts and good things. He lives at the North Pole and comes to us at Christmas." It was all very sweet. I could not help wondering a bit whether she was romancing or declaring her faith; you can never tell.

But who is Santa Claus? He has been with us so long we cannot ignore him. I wondered as I talked with my little friend whether she herself might not have invented Santa Claus had she not found him ready-made. But he is almost as elusive in history as he is on Christmas morning. His name comes from Holland. "Sankt Klaus" is the Dutch for Saint Nicholas, a bishop who was a friend to the children. The Germans and Celts from earliest times held their yuletide feast at the time of the winter solstice in celebration of the turn of the sun in its course. When these people were converted to Christianity many of

their usages passed over to the celebration of Christ's birth. Some of these customs prevail to this day. The more spiritual in the Church sought to counteract anything that was pagan among the old customs. They introduced the singing of carols and other things in keeping with the Scripture account. Santa Claus came in as the impersonation of this very kindly old bishop who lived long ago and was good to the little folks. I wonder how far wrong my little friend is.

I once heard a Jew, an old man, talk about Christmas. He spoke with pathos of how hard it was for Jewish parents to resist the Christmas spirit. It is a hard question their children ask, "Why do we not observe Christmas?" I should dread the task of trying to lead the mind of my little friend away from Christmas. It would be to take out of her life, in a form she understands, the most joyous fact. Christmas means more than just one wonderful day, for its light is diffused all through the year. Its message makes glad all the centuries.

38

DO YOU WEAR GOGGLES?

MOST likely you do, for it is a human trait; perhaps I should say a human weakness. Birth, or training, or habit, or desire, or some personal obliquity puts goggles on us. And most of us know it not and act as if we were seeing true and therefore thinking straight. These goggles squat on our mental faces and hook themselves behind our spiritual ears and make our world blue or green or red notwithstanding the color it really is. And how strange it is that we can see the goggles the other fellow wears, but we do not discover our own; at least it is not easily done. Goggles, ordinary goggles, are peculiar shaped spectacles worn to modify the light. They change the appearance of things. But I am not referring to goggles that are consciously worn and so easily taken off. I am thinking of goggles that are put on us by habit, and training, and custom.

What an array of goggles there is! There are goggles like everything about which men think—political goggles, religious goggles, theological goggles, educational goggles! There are goggles that make a physician look like an Indian medicine man. Really goggles constitute one of the problems of human society. They divert the mind from truth and mislead effort. Goggles are the chief cause of strife and division.

The Scriptures are the truth of God for our spiritual guidance, but they must be read without goggles if we are to get the right sort of guidance. God hasn't any goggles, and if we are to see as God sees we must put ours off. The goggles they wear are responsible for the differences between most Christians. So many Christians get their opinions of scriptural things from magazines and periodicals and their minds are hopelessly goggled when they turn to the Scriptures. Goggles interfere with truth, and truth alone sets us free.

All goggles will come off some day, however much they may have become a part of us. May it be sooner than later! Peter got his taken off suddenly at Joppa. Paul lost his near Damascus. We cannot take them with us when we "enter through the gate into the city." What an assortment of goggles will be piled outside that gate like a great waste-heap! They are as useless here as in heaven. It is not easy, but let us get rid of the goggles.

39

YOKES THAT ARE TAKEN!

IT was a far cry from the raw prairie with its tough sod, grass and wild flowers to the fields of wheat and corn. Only experience could give any adequate idea of the toughness of that sod. It constituted an effectual barrier to the husbandman with visions of golden harvests. The prairie was the paradise of the ranger, the home of vast herds. It required a steel plowshare and a sharp cutter to "break" the sod. The furrow was usually twelve inches wide and about two deep. The strip of sod turned over from the mold-board like a great black ribbon. It was a task that required power, this task of "breaking" the native sod; and it was before the day of tractors!

My father brought to this task three yoke of oxen. I shall never forget the evening they arrived at our home in the wilderness. They were yoked in teams, three of them, drawing a ramshackle old army wagon. It was of a type I later saw creeping across the plains. As this ambling train of my father's came to a stop in the yard, I thought of the wagons of Egypt which Joseph sent for his father Jacob, about which my mother had told me. Of course there was scant likeness; but that wagon was different from anything I had ever seen. I was at the age when being in the way was my chief activity. How well I remember those oxen! Baldy and Muley were the leaders; Turk

and Jerry the middle team; two powerful fellows, Tom and Red were the wheelers. They wore yokes and were chained together. When it was time to work, each ox would step into his place, under his own end of the yoke. They furnished the power that dragged the gang plow that turned over hundreds of acres of wild land making possible fields of harvest.

I cannot but remember those oxen, their yokes and their work when I read the words of Christ, "Take my yoke upon you!" He was familiar with oxen yoked together. A greater task than turning the sod of the wide prairie was in His mind. The yoke of which He was speaking is as real as any He ever helped fashion of wood. It is taken by a willing surrender such as He asks. His yoke is a yoke of service. Christ and His yokefellows are accomplishing a work whereby "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Because Christ is yoked with us, the yoke is easy and the burden is light. To scorn His yoke is to assume a heavy one indeed! "That is the bitterest of all; to wear the yoke of our own wrongdoing."

40

"WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN"

THAT means the close of summer and the end of harvest and a season that has a blessing all its own; the period when the year's work is ended, when the fire is laid in the hearth, when the invigorating tang of frost is felt. It is the season of Thanksgiving! I wonder if we really are thankful? I suppose we are at times; and we all recognize that the hours of thankfulness are the best hours. Times when life is not pervaded by the gracious ministry of gratitude are neither profitable nor happy. "Be ye thankful," is a scriptural admonition that has sound truth in it. The people with whom you love to be are those whose minds have the overflow of thanksgiving. One of the letters I treasure is from a noble woman; a letter in which she strung her sentences as pearls on a thread of gratitude. It was written out of affliction and deferred hope. One of the saddest pictures I have in memory is that of a mother sitting with bowed form and wet face. She had just received into her soul the arrow of ingratitude let fly by her own son. All those tender ministries of mother had faded out of his mind. The spirit of gratitude had fled from his selfish soul.

The exclamation of Scripture comes to mind: "O that man would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men." When we are in our best state we join in that exclama-

tion! We wonder at human ingratitude! God is most wonderfully kind; kinder than we can ever know! He sends the winds through the branches. The bubbling stream gets its music from Him. He painted the lily and gave the rose its fragrance. The mountains and forests are His own. The sea is His. He established the seasons. He stretches out the heavens as a curtain. Yet He feedeth His flock like a shepherd and gathers the lambs in His arms.

Since the *Mayflower* dropped anchor in Provincetown Bay, November 21, 1620, thanksgiving has been a national custom. When the anchor chain brought the ship to rest the weary voyagers gave thanks to God; they praised the Pilot who had guided them through the stormy seas! It became their habit when the harvests were gathered to give thanks to God who gave both seedtime and harvest. It is one of our best American traditions. Our choicest memories cluster about this day of worship and good cheer. May we pass on the great institution unimpaired!

41

THE BONDAGE OF FEAR!

SHE was saying, "I am so afraid to die! Oh, I am so afraid!" She held my hand in both of hers and searched my face with frightened eyes. She had sent for me because she believed I could help her. Being a pastor is always serious business, and often brings one into most sacred hours. Here was a devoted Christian woman with a fear foreign to the Christian faith; there was something wrong somewhere. In such times mere words count for nothing. Platitudes are useless and worse. "I am sorry you are so afraid," I said, "for Christ came to deliver us from that very bondage." "Oh, yes, I know," she said, "but I am so afraid." The snare in which she was entangled was very evident; how to get her out was not so easy. There came to mind a trip we had made one summer when she was a member of the party. We had to ferry across the upper reaches of the river; there was a long detour through the woods indicated on the map; there were mountain roads not the best. These things were fearsome to her and overshadowed her pleasure. But really the creaky old ferry was a delight; the detour gave an intimate view of the woods not had from the highway; the supposed dangers dissolved as we approached them into pleasant experiences.

As I watched her ebbing life I understood the mis-

take she was making. I retold the story of those wonderful summer days and recalled her fear. I got a smile from her when I asked her if her premature fear of the ferry and the woods was not foolish. I explained that God gives us strength and comfort for the day as the day comes; not before! "God has given you His word that when the hour comes for you to die He will be there," I said. "You are afraid now because you are trying to meet tomorrow's eventuality with the strength and promise of today. God has made full provision for each day; and when you need Him most He will be there."

She rested quietly for a few moments and when she looked up again there was a different expression. "I have been foolish," she said, "I am not afraid now and I will not be." I never saw her again, but her sister told me the fear did not return. The form of death lost its terror when flanked by the promises of God. And this is a truth for every day!

42

"FIVE OF THEM ARE DEAD"

THERE were seven of us in our crowd of young men," the doctor was saying, "and we were all about the same age; we went to the same parties and shared in the same sports. Where one went we all went. We had great times together." He paused in his remarks and I knew the years were dropping away and he was going back to the familiar scenes of youth and to his light-hearted companions. His early life was reproducing itself through the processes of memory. Familiar scenes were returning over the pathway of recollection. The eyes of his mind were searching the screen of memory. His face was an interesting study as all this was taking place. At length he spoke again: "Most of that company followed questionable habits, one of which was the use of liquor. I used to tell them that they were making a mistake; that habits of that sort would never get them anywhere. Now, five of those boys are dead." By word as well as by implication he connected their early death with dissipation in youth. He closed the incident by a remark which he said was supported by his long experience: "You cannot trifle with life."

I was thinking as he spoke of the statement of the great apostle who had such a wide horizon from which to draw his information. He said: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life

that now is, and of that which is to come." The path of dissipation is a blind alley from which there is no exit except into the miry bogs of failure. The five young men of the doctor's company are gone. The two who had different habits remain. In the university we used to write Q. E. D. after the demonstration of a geometric proposition. God's great moral laws reach on to a Q. E. D. upon the final page of every life.

Is it essential to a good time or to good fellowship to indulge in things that are wrong? The doctor declared that it was a notion so commonly held and so essentially wrong that it mystified him. I share in his wonder; for life has fully justified the statement of Paul. On that great text the ages have written, "Quod Est Demonstratum."

43

WAS THE REFORMATION A MISTAKE?

IT is being said in some quarters today that the Reformation was a mistake; that Luther and his associates in other lands were not really benefactors. Multitudes of people in our land no longer take the Reformation seriously. Some have wondered what it was all about. In the effort to be generous a blind spot of large proportions has developed in the modern mind in which the abominations of the Roman hierarchy are obscured. We need to be fair; and reformers are not always fair. We also need to hold fast what has been won by infinite sacrifice, by the blood and tears of the fathers. There are, indeed, great truths which we hold in common with the Romanists; a fact which we would not forget.

But we differ from Romanism in a vital way. The Reformers protested the abuses of the hierarchy and so got the name of Protestants, a very unfortunate name; for they did immeasurably more than protest. They led the Church back toward New Testament models. They blasted away forms and customs with which the Church had become incrusted through superstition and wickedness. The legend of St. Peter's Chair introduced spiritual despotism. The worship of the wafer is essentially idolatry. The exaltation of Mary obscured the glory of Christ. The doctrine of purgatory became and still remains an enriching bit

of theology. The sale of indulgences commercialized sin to fill the coffers of the Church. Last of all is the absurd doctrine of the infallibility of the pope.

The Reformers not only protested these abuses, but they brought forth a body of doctrine true to the Scriptures. Their first task, like that of Nehemiah, was the removal of rubbish. They began by promulgating Bible information. They circulated Bibles in the language of the people; and the hierarchy gathered and burned them! The Reformers taught the authority of the Scriptures and the liberty of the conscience; the hierarchy condemned such teaching and anathematized the teachers and put them to death when that could be done. Luther had a price on his head! William of Orange fell under a hired assassin's bullet on the stairway of the Delft. This same hierarchy is in operation today, baffled it is true by modern conditions, but unchanged. While the hierarchy lives, the Reformation can never be over. That hierarchy is a superstructure of despotism that has reared itself over one branch of the Christian Church. It boasts that it is unchanged.

44

A CAMP IN THE WILDERNESS

WE are camped on a bluff overlooking a lake in the western Adirondacks. Trees shelter us from the sun and afford protection from any storm that may come, as they do in these mountain districts. We came to this place today through that vast wilderness in which Roosevelt was taking a holiday when, through the death of McKinley, he became President. The road we followed was, for the greater distance, a country road. Lawrence has a wonderful fire at the base of an enormous boulder conveniently placed for us by the glacier. Many an Indian in times past must have used this same ideal place for a fire. Tonight the fire is not only acceptable for companionship but for its warmth; for the night is cool. I can easily understand how the primitive people thought of fire as the special gift or manifestation of God. One feels its mystery in the wilderness.

The night has settled and how quiet all is except for a few night birds, the bark of an occasional dog in the distance or the crackling of our fire. The moon has just come up over the range of mountains. It is full and how beautiful it is as it seems to float in the sky just over the rim of the mountain. Only a few nights ago I saw it emerge from the sea, red, gloomy and dripping with water. Tonight it is brilliant, silvery and joyous. We seemed to have slipped back

in a few days over the traveled ways of life to the primitive. Only the faithful Buick speaks of the world we have left. It has served us well on all sorts of roads. Today it was a cozy shelter from a riotous mountain storm. Tonight after our fire burns out it will be our bedroom, secure against marauding mosquitoes and affording comfortable sleep. But even the car takes shadowy form and merges into the weird attractions of this night in the wilderness. An occasional boatman passing down the lake comes opposite our fire and his creaky oars are silent. He wonders who we are and we pay him the same honor as he passes on into the night.

There are some privations and some hardships; but it pays. Sometimes the eggs are too hard and sometimes the bacon is sprinkled with ashes; the coffee boils over frequently and the butter is always messy. But the grip of the formality of modern life is jarred loose. Bondage is sloughed off. Thoughts crawl out of artificial grooves. There is a new point of view. Problems seem different so far removed from the maddening crowd. God seems closer. Truth seems more elemental. As I write these lines by the light of our glorious fire in the wilderness, I am sure it pays.

45

GOD'S TOILER

THERE came into my hand recently a poem that has a real message; a message to put strength into the hand that is relaxing its hold on the tools of life! How often God's fellow-workers feel like letting go. Most of the worthwhile work that is done for Christ and the Church is not done in the limelight, but down some back alley of the parish, or in some obscure corner of the vineyard. It is hard to work in obscurity! Results seem meagre and appreciation seems absent! Demas let go, but Paul would not let go! Most of Paul's work seemed obscure while he was doing it. The toiler never knows what value God is attaching to the service he is rendering or what results will arise from his toil.

The author of the poem is unknown, but I pass it on to our officers who are doing their work faithfully without thought of reward, hoping it will speak to you as it did to me.

"I want to let go, but I will not let go!
I am tired, it is true, and discouraged and blue,
Worn out through and through! But I will not let go!

"I want to let go, but I will not let go!
I am poor and perplexed, disheartened and vexed,
Care not what comes next! But I will not let go!

"I want to let go, but I will not let go!
There is work to be done, a race to be run,
A crown to be won! And I will not let go!

"I want to let go, but I will not let go!
There are battles to fight by day and by night,
For God and the right! And I will not let go!

"I want to let go, but I will not let go!
I never will yield, nor lie down on the field,
Nor surrender my shield! No, I will not let go!

"I want to let go, but I will not let go!
Be this ever my song 'gainst legions of wrong!
O God make me strong that I may not let go!"

46

"THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE"

ARISTOTLE propounded three axioms of thought. One of these he called the law of the "Excluded Middle." This simply means that in the case of two contradictory statements if one is true the other is not. There is no middle ground. A third possibility is excluded. The magnetic needle cannot be both true and untrue at the same time. A mathematical proposition is either true or untrue. A line is either straight or it is not. It is quite impossible for it to be both straight and curved at the same time. Aristotle called attention to the fact that the universe and the laws of the universe were dependable, a thing which many people still seem not to understand. They are often discovered including a middle where God has excluded it. In such a case a man has the universe against him. How can he succeed?

Jesus often brought this law into prominence. How clear and pungent were His declarations: "No man can serve two masters;" he is with God or with Mammon; a middle is excluded! "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." He will reap nothing else. The harvest is either of the flesh or of the spirit! Again there is no middle! A man is either Christ-centered or self-centered! There is no other possibility! Men often deceive themselves, but self-deception, or the deception of others, does not change

the facts! The people of the parable to whom Jesus said, "I never knew you, depart," believed themselves most worthy. They had based their hope on that which did not exist. It is a house built on the sand which falls when the test comes. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to base one's future on an excluded middle when the essential truth is so evident and so accessible.

There fell into my hands recently a letter from an Episcopal rector addressed to his parish in which the following questions were asked. They are supposed to deal with facts which have an excluded middle. At least they are suggestive: "Are you a wing or a weight for the church? Are you a power or a problem? a promoter or a provoker? Are you a booster or a boaster? a soldier or a slacker? a friend or a fault-finder? a peace-maker or a strife-provoker?" The excluded middle is not so evident here, but the suggestion challenges attention.

47

AUTUMN FIRES!

IT seems but yesterday that Summer was coming on; when the trees were putting forth their leaves and the gardens were being planted. How quickly it has passed, and now Fall is here with another and different aspect. Genial Spring was lately filling every nook and corner with beautiful verdure; now Fall is setting Autumn fires to burn with quiet but relentless flame over the whole landscape. Drifts of smoke hang in the valleys; the horizon is indistinct in the afternoon haze. All summer long the leaves that have helped the trees to breathe and expand have ceased to function and hang in golden or crimson beauty upon the shivering trees; or litter the ground awaiting a return into the mold. Everywhere these days the autumn fires are burning upon the hearth of nature.

Memories of autumn in the wide, far-flung spaces of the prairie will never fade; memories of boyhood. Nothing could be more fascinating than the plains, unfenced, unsurveyed, untamed! The plow and the fences of civilization destroyed the mystic spell of the prairies. Spring clothed the undulating plains with succulent grass as far as the eye could reach, and bespangled every view with her own wild flowers. When the Summer was over the green gave place to brown. Not a flower was to be seen even by searching, but the dry grass which crackled under foot was

the home of coveys of quail and flocks of the beautiful prairie chicken. The life of the summer was burning down under the autumn fires into the prairie mold. But the memory of that scene, the call of the quail, the drumming of the prairie chickens in the early mornings of autumn still remain.

There is an autumn fire that burns in the hearts of men. It is kindled by the hand of God, and burns as a vestal flame. Scripture recognizes its value: "Quench not the Spirit," we are warned! The fire of God burning out the effete, the old, the outworn, making way for the new, is not to be smothered! When that fire goes out there is spiritual death; the fields of the soul are clogged with the useless, the outworn. The Spirit is an autumn fire that burns in the fields of life as a purifying flame. God is always thoroughly purging His floor; old things are being burned away and all things are becoming new. It is God's way.

48

HOW CAN THE CHURCH SUCCEED?

OF course Christ meant for His Church to succeed. It was not called into being at so much suffering and sacrifice to fail. Such an ultimate result is unthinkable. And yet there is the fact of partial failure in every day and year. It is evident in any survey we may make, in every report we read. The conditions that might be under His leadership and the conditions that really obtain are not equal. This fact is pressed home upon us whether the view is personal or local or world-wide. The Church is not living up to the appeal of her great Lord! The Church, while far from failing, is loitering at the task.

I recently saw a statement on railroad success by Mr. Atterbury, vice-president in charge of operation of the Pennsylvania system. "We may have," he said, "the most perfect system of railroad regulation imaginable; we may have the finest plant and the most perfect equipment; we may have all the brains which management can provide; but the ultimate success of railroad operation depends upon coöperation with the management by the employees, who carry on the routine operations. Railroading consists of a vast number of small operations, few of which can be directly overseen. The success of the operation, therefore, largely depends upon whether or not the individual employee actually wants to render efficient and

faithful service. We believe our employees understand this, and they are giving us a constantly greater measure of effective coöperation in our work."

The faithful discharge of that "small operation" which cannot be overseen has made the Pennsylvania the most dependable railroad in the world. It brings the trains in on time. It gives comfort and confidence to the traveler. Is it not just that same faithful discharge of small operations on the part of the membership that brings success to the Church? Most of the failure of the Church, as of the railroad, is traceable to failure in the "small operations" that cannot be directly overseen. Let us give Ninth Church a larger success this fall by faithfulness in the task that may seem small; the doing of which may lead to an apparently obscure corner of our Lord's vineyard.

49

THE BURIAL OF A STRANGER

WHEN my telephone rang one morning the voice at the other end of the line asked me if I would conduct the funeral of a stranger; a stranger twenty-two years old, from the North of Ireland. He had died after an illness of but a few days. He had been coming to our evening service and felt at home. We buried him in Arlington. The group that stood by and heard the solemn words of committal numbered none of his own blood. It was a burial far from home. The October sun was having the better of the tang of fall that had been in the air. A great oak stood near the grave into which we lowered the form of the stranger. Not a leaf rustled, so quiet were the winds. The foliage, as yet untouched by frost, was nevertheless aglow with the autumn fire proclaiming the end of summer. Standing by that grave, I thought how strange it is that nature should produce so much loveliness and then herself set fires to overrun her fields. Some of her loveliness she destroys early; the violets and the wild flowers; others like the aster, the sunflower and the foliage of the woods, await the holocaust of the autumn. No symbolism of Scripture is more significant than that of flowers. How much like life the flowers are! I thought of our stranger as one of the earlier flowers.

Far across the sea a mother kept vigil during that

hour. The cable had carried the word to her and her spirit was with us out on that beautiful hillside where we were saying, "Earth to earth"! The pathos of the absent mother filled our minds. The president of the company which gave him employment was not too busy to be there. His presence helped; and some of us felt that all companies are not soulless. A few old friends and a few new ones stood while the Church, universal in her ministry, gave him burial. But none of these things assuaged the pathos of a grave among strangers; on a hillside he had never beheld.

But there was something there that lifted the burden; something very real. That something was revealed in the great words, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live." It glowed upon the spiritual landscape even as the autumn fire upon the physical. As we turned away we were sure the earth and sea should give up their dead even as He said. After all, it matters little where we await the great day; for it is God's world and every grave where His children sleep is in His keeping.

50

"ESSE, NON VIDERI"

ON a summer afternoon I drove out along Darby Creek with some friends. We had a well-filled basket and we were looking for a quiet and shaded spot where we might enjoy the evening together in the open. It has always been a wholesome thing for me to leave the city streets and immerse both the body and mind in the quiet influence of the woods. This evening we found such a place under some great elm trees beside the brook. It was a wonderful summer evening. The ruffled clouds, gold-fringed, seemed to draw a curtain over the mystery of the deep blue sky. The exhaustless beauty of summer-time was everywhere in evidence. I do not remember what we had in the basket that evening, but the influence of that scene remains. A tree on that hillside, among other trees standing apart, caught my attention. It was quite covered with foliage and was very beautiful as it lifted itself against the evening sky. It had more apparent life than any other in the group. But when I examined it I discovered it was a dead tree literally covered with the entwining life of a wild wistaria. Its life was only apparent. It had an external veneer of life; the tree itself was dead.

There came back to me that summer evening the motto of a high school class, "To be, not to seem!" The dead tree with the external life recalled the high

purpose it expressed. There is nothing more lovely in all nature than a tree; but it must be a living tree with an inner hunger and thirst; a growing tree with its mouth pressed to the flowing breast of the earth. The dead tree covered with wistaria had little charm. It excited only a passing interest.

There are lives that are real like the great elm under whose shelter we rested; and there are lives that are artificial like the tree that seemed to be alive, but was really dead! As I sat on the grass thinking of the artificial beauty of the tree and the old time motto of the class, my thoughts reached out to Him who came to give us escape from that which is artificial; who came to give us life, life in abundance; not apparent life only, but the life that flows through the vine to the branches and to the ends of the twigs and puts forth its abundant leaf and fruit.

51

"THINGS IN COMMON"

SOMETIMES a wonderful truth escapes from common life and lives apart. The more precious a truth is the more reason that it should be held in service. To hold a truth apart from life is to lose it. I am thinking of the Holy Communion, which symbolizes and visualizes a very wonderful truth. The word itself means to have things in common. Sometimes the word is translated in Scripture as fellowship. The disciples continued in the Apostles' doctrine and in fellowship; that is communion. John speaks of our fellowship being with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and again it is communion. If we are incapable of having things in common, we are incapable of friendship or fellowship with God or with man. Communion is a vital life process wherein we are in sympathetic and helpful intercourse and association of thought and feeling. Nature speaks a various language to those who love her and enter into communion with her visible form.

One thinks of the old home and the days of childhood. Things were in common there! All were included in the thought of each. The strength of the strongest and the frailties of the weakest were pooled. If one member suffered all the members shared that suffering. There was common prosperity and common adversity. The treasures of life were safe in the

keeping of the old home. The strength of a sturdy father was in common. The treasures of affection of a tried mother were in common. The old home was a place of communion.

But to have things in common with God! That is the marvelous truth. It is a truth that must not be allowed to escape from real life to the realm of theory. It means He shares our poverty and we share His riches! I may be ever so weak, but He is strong; and we have things in common. Is that not what the Incarnation means? He surely had things in common with a sinning, stumbling people! In that communion we share. His broken body meant His having things in common with us! His shed blood! He took our sin: we took His merit. He took our death: we take His life. This is a truth not for the realm of theory, but for the dusty highway of life. To the things in common how great is His contribution!

52

"FORBID THEM NOT!"

I WAS going along the street, on a recent afternoon, in the discharge of my pastoral duties. It is not getting any easier to be a city pastor; and I was turning problems over in my mind and looking for solutions which seemed elusive. I was conscious of difficulties and entanglements. Something of the dreariness of the leaden skies and the dripping trees had gotten into my thoughts. I was recalled to another world by the voice of a little girl speaking my name. I looked around and she was running toward me with her arms extended. I picked her up, a little fairy not yet four years old, and she whispered a message in my ear that changed my outlook for the day. Her wet hands and gossamer spoiled a perfectly fresh collar, but the day's laundry bill was a small price to pay for her ministry.

It was not possible for her to know what she had done for me; I could no more tell her than she could understand. But it was a gracious ministry. She was just herself and she had recalled me to myself. The ministry she exercised was not exceptional; it is constant. It comes to us all. My life would be dreary enough on these streets were it not for the cheery words and the happy greetings of the children. I remember the rebuke the Master administered to the disciples, "Forbid them not." I cannot understand

how anyone who has a spark of affection would want to forbid them. They represent what is clean and pure. They have no ulterior motives. They have nothing to conceal. They harbor no enmity or suspicion. They, in their innocency, belong to Christ. There are no pagan children, no heathen little folks.

Paul said he was debtor to the Greek and to the Barbarian, to the wise and unwise. For myself, I want to add that I am debtor also to the children. And when I turn this fact over and look on the other side I discover a great thing: it is the fact of a responsibility that fills life with meaning. What possibilities in the little girl that soiled my collar with her wet hands! What of her future? For her there is splendid wonmanhood, grace and beauty! Or is it wreckage of the saddest sort the world has? Her home must answer first of all! But we are not without responsibility. Let us have new resolves this Children's Day to pay our debt to these little ones.

53

"BECAUSE HE FOLLOWETH NOT WITH US"

SUSPICION is a dreadful seed to sow in the field of life. Who can measure the sorrow it brings, or the evil? No good can ever be set down to its credit. And, like the tares of the field, it must be sown under cover of darkness. Recently the fields of God have been sown over with suspicion. Men have been perplexed to find their integrity brought under surveillance. Those who do not or cannot "frame to pronounce" some shibboleth are branded at the fords without further evidence. John had one day forbidden a man to work wonders in the name of Christ because "he followeth not with us;" but Jesus said, "Forbid him not"! He denies the use of any shibboleth less comprehensive than Himself. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" said Paul on this point. Controversy is helpful when conducted in the fraternal spirit.

In 1906 Elihu Root, then Secretary of State, delivered an address that was published all over the land. It was an arraignment of a certain editor for stirring through his newspaper the passions of men; for passing on as information that which was untrue; for confusing issues and destroying reputations for selfish ends. "This method of abuse wrought its natural consequence in the murder of President McKinley," said Mr. Root. "Readers of the 'Journal' were

taught to believe that McKinley was a monster whose taking off would be a service to humankind. What wonder that the excitable brain of Czolgosz answered to such an appeal? He never knew McKinley. He was answering to the lesson he had learned." That was a wholesome bit of discipline.

Progress must be made by a process of reconciliation. Men need to sit down together and reasonably talk things through. The spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of love, is essential; without it Christ says we are none of His. Near the end of life Gladstone said: "Nothing grows upon me so much with lengthening of life as the sense of difficulty with which we are beset whenever we attempt to take to ourselves the functions of the Eternal Judge. The shades of the rainbow are not so nice and the sands of the seashore are not such a multitude as are the subtle, shifting, blending forms of thought and of circumstance that go to determine the character of us and of our acts. But there is one that seeth plainly and judgeth righteously."

54

WHEN THE DAY IS DONE!

I AM writing the Pastor's Corner this week under conditions that are entirely new and strange; they might be called overwhelming. Billows from out the unknown sea follow each other over the soul and break on an unstable shore-line. I am sitting by the bedside of my dear wife as the midnight hour passes; an hour that pulls so hard on the frail spirits of those long sick. She has had a strong and cheerful spirit during the fourteen terrible but precious months, but the odds were against her. She has talked quietly of the time when the evening bell would call her in from the fields of service. There has been no complaint against life and no bemoaning her condition. Not that; but a willingness to accept what was in store in quiet confidence. Last week she asked me to tell the officers and teachers to "go on; go on." Only today, in a brief moment of consciousness, she said, "Don't cry! I don't want you to cry."

So we are watching as the sand in the hour-glass runs out. And I am realizing that there is nothing exceptional in this room or in my experience. In our own church family just now others have watched and waited. I have been thinking tonight of the Gospel which I have preached; it has passed under review in the subdued, but penetrating light of this midnight hour. There has come to me a demonstration of the

Gospel in this hour of conclusions. Any ship can sail a quiet ocean; any plan of life will work measurably when there is youth and health and sunshine. But the Gospel works at midnight when the last grains of sand are slipping through; or when the billows are mountainous. It is a wonderful plan to live by. And it fails not when the day is done and the light fades out of the sky and familiar forms become indistinct and implements fall from tired hands.

And that Scripture came to mind: "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning!" How strong is that desire for morning in the watcher, the sufferer, the lost traveler! The Psalmist seems to have paused to review what he had written, realizing how strong it was; and then he seems to say, "Yes, it is true! I long for God more than the watcher longs for the morning." So at this midnight we turn our faces to the morning and to the Day Star and to God.

55

JULIET

I CAN speak of her, now that she has gone, because I spoke to her while she was here in the drill of service and under the strain of life. She had a wonderful girlhood. I knew it when we were passing through those happy days. I knew it better as more mature years came on; and now as I look back and see how true she was to all that was sweetest and best in girlhood, it has become a priceless treasure of memory. There were hardships, but these did not keep her from enjoying her youth. She loved the out-of-doors and was always ready for a lark of the right sort. It is a great joy to write down today that there is not one shadow across the fair face of memory of act or word I would wish expunged. She was a wonderful girl for any boy to be with. How much I owe to her true, sweet girlhood!

She was a wonderful wife and mother and carried to her last conscious hour her fine spirit. It takes poise and balance to be wife and mother. Into her tasks there went a song, a smile and the joy of service. Her sense of humor helped her over many a hard day; for hard days, as they come to all, came to her. But in the day of trial she did not fail. She was incarnate devotion to her children. Their needs were her first duty and their good her great pleasure. She knew how to lead, inspire and control. She found nothing

inconsistent in the duties of wife, or mother, or home-keeper with the joys of living. Every day was made to pay its own way in pleasure and benefit.

She was a wonderful Christian. Her instincts were true and clean. In all our years I never had to fix up anything she did or explain any word she spoke. Her word and deed were always helpful. Endowed with a beautiful voice and a warm spiritual nature, she sang the Gospel into many hearts. She was greatly interested in missions and missionaries and stood resolutely for the cause and for the men and women on the field. Her prayer calendar was always on her desk and she was unwilling for anyone to defame those for whom she prayed. She did her best work, perhaps, among the children and homes of the Cradle Roll. She grasped the spiritual opportunities offered here and made the most of them as time permitted. She had an intelligent courage back of her convictions and was not slow to speak for a great cause. As she lived, so she died. She wanted to live on for many reasons and talked about it; but quietly and with confidence and poise she made her final plans and yielded up her soul to God.

56

"THE SEA SHALL GIVE UP THE DEAD THAT ARE IN IT"

THAT would seem about the last fortress of death that might be forced open. How deep, how mysterious, how resistless the sea seems! This Palm Sunday as I write this Pastor's Corner we are traveling across the Gulf Stream, flowing through its mystical banks, the greatest and the most mysterious river of the earth. A school of porpoise, disturbed by our ship, went rolling away into the watery horizon. How many have found sepulchre beneath these waves since that time when the good mate said to the brave admiral, "This mad sea shows his teeth tonight"! No stone to mark the spot; no flower to express the affection of the living. Every sign of the tragedy swallowed and forgotten. What treasures are hidden here! But as I stood on the stern of our ship making her way through the night the text kept saying itself over to me, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it." That seems the very ultimate fortress! Death and the sea!

For death, like the sea, is tremendously real. Like the sea, death is mysterious. Its horizon is a desolation like the watery waste of the sea! And what treasure it holds! What tragedies the dark waters of death hide! Only fools make a mock at death. Its results are so confusing, so disconcerting. Like

the sea, it swallows life and leaves no ripple where the living have gone down. No, whatever dreamers may say, death is real. The Scriptures definitely set down the reality of death as a grim fact.

But there is a power greater than death; greater than death and the sea! There is One whose voice is as the sound of many waters, whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength. He has wrecked the fortress of death! His is the voice that shall speak; and the earth and the sea shall give up their dead! The proof of it all is His own resurrection, that empty tomb in the garden. It is the great Christian fact. Paul built his whole reasoned structure upon it. He came forth with undisturbed identity; and so shall we. His disciples knew Him after the resurrection; and we shall know each other. He was changed and we shall be changed; but the identity remains undisturbed. Paul sees it through in that great chapter and closes with a challenge, a shout from his eminence, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory?" The Saviour has carried away the portals of the fortress!

57

A SERVICE IN BERMUDA

OUR Sunday in Bermuda was a beautiful day. The sun was bright and the air was invigorating as it came off the wide spaces of the sea. We decided to ride seven miles down the island to Christ Presbyterian Church in Warwick. The roads are fine for the bicycle, which affords the popular means of travel. The trip down was a constant delight along the shore and amid the luxuriant foliage. The colorings of the Bermuda landscape are gorgeous. The houses, for the most part, are built of coral rock and are white, and make a beautiful contrast with the dark green of the Bermuda cedar. Bluebirds and cardinals were along the way in great numbers. How beautiful the sea is around this island; and whichever way the wind blows it has the tang of the sea. Easter lilies were growing along the way in great profusion. They are cultivated in the open fields.

We decided to go to this church because it is the boyhood church of Dr. Francis L. Patton. He is a native of Bermuda and has now returned there and lives in the house in which he was born on Carberry Hill. We hoped we might see him; and in this we were not disappointed. It was communion Sunday and he was in his pew. The service was quaint and very bare in a way; yet it was good to be there. Lawrence, my companion awheel and afield, and I both

felt it so. The church occupies an elevation by the roadside and is surrounded by old graves and luxuriant trees. It is a country church, if any part of Bermuda may be spoken of as country. The building is over 200 years old and many tablets were on the wall. One commemorates the visit of Whitfield to the church and makes note of the services he held. The building is very modest and old-fashioned. Perhaps eighty people were at the service that Sunday morning.

I was wondering while I sat through the service if this small church recognized the vast contribution it had made to constructive Christianity in her distinguished son! Here Dr. Patton was nurtured. It was his home church. From it he came to the American pulpit; to the Presidency of Princeton University and later to the Presidency of Princeton Seminary. To that church and that ancestral home he now returns after his eventful life. Few churches have made an equal contribution to the cause of Christ. It was a good day to live and think. The bright flowers and birds, the islands dotting the beautiful sea, seemed a part of the day.

58

REMEMBER!

THERE was a cottonwood tree in the corner of our yard at home. When a small boy, I had carried that tree from the bank of the old swimming pond and planted it where it grew so great. I used to watch the shimmering moonlight on its leaves from my window. The rustle of its leaves was usually the last thing I heard at night. A nightingale came year after year and from that tree poured out his wonderful notes on moonlight nights. Families of brown thrush nested and sang in our hedgerow, and a mockingbird used to come every summer to our orchard. I can hear yet the sound of the splashing rain upon the corn leaves, and see the billowy waves sweeping across the wide fields of ripening wheat. The haze of the Indian summer, the drumming of the prairie chickens, the sound of the reaper, and the lowing of the herd will always remain.

I did not think of any of these things at the time except as passing experiences. But that nightingale has been singing for me on occasions when there was no moon; and I can still hear the soughing of the wind, and the rain coming across the fields as the storm approaches. The waving grain is an etching to remain among the living things of life. How little of the future was in my thought as I looked upon the young tree by the pond! Or as I heard the drumming

of the chickens out upon the prairie; or as I heard my mother sing softly some folk song or psalm as she gave her life in service!

But experiences are the materials out of which memory builds her palaces; and the richer the experiences the happier are the memories. Blank days are profitless. I can never be thankful enough for the living things of my boyhood; for that old cottonwood tree and the song of the nightingale and the music of the hedgerow, and the song of my mother. Yes, there were hardships, but they are forgotten. Paul wrote to Timothy to remember Jesus Christ. But He can only be remembered as He is experienced. We can speculate about Him or reason about Him, but we can only remember what we experience. Timothy had had experiences with Christ. Some way the sweetness of that song and the beauty of those nights and the joy of those harvest fields blend in my boyhood memory with the experiences into which my mother led me with the Saviour.

59

MISUNDERSTOOD!

JOHN THE BAPTIST came on his mission neither eating nor drinking, not mingling in social life, and they said he had a devil; but he was misunderstood. Jesus came eating and drinking, mingling in social life, attending the dinners and festivals, and they said he was a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. When He went home with Zacchæus they that observed murmured against Him, saying that He had gone to be a guest of a man that was a sinner! They were honestly troubled; but there was joy in the home of Zacchæus. Jesus was going about in the performance of His mission; but He was misunderstood! With tears going down over His face He said of Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wing." But He could not, for He was misunderstood! Even Jesus seemed unable to bridge the chasm of that misunderstanding! The Holy Spirit seemed unable to dissipate its dark shade!

I do not know anything that ministers more of sorrow and failure in life than misunderstanding. When the wife misunderstands the husband, or the husband the wife, or the father the son, or the son the father, or when mother and daughter misunderstand each other, there is heartache and the ongoing of home is estopped. Every great leader has been misunderstood.

Israel killed the prophets but later generations, coming to an understanding of them, with belated appreciation of their greatness, built memorials to them. On the spot where Latimer was burned as a malefactor a memorial rests in his honor. Joseph was misunderstood by his brethren. Their attitude filled his heart with sorrow; it led him to those terrible years of imprisonment. But in his case, as in all others, " wisdom is justified of her children."

The heartaches and the contention of today in the Church arise from the shade cast by misunderstanding. The thing which separates men and brethren is not so much a difference of view as a misunderstanding of each other. In the dim light of misunderstanding ugly forms arise which have no real substance, forms which disappear in the clear light of understanding. As I listened to the debate in Presbytery last Monday, as I hear what men are saying, the sentiment that cries for expression is, " There is misunderstanding! " Most of our troubles would vanish from the home and Church and community with understanding.

60

WE MUST REMEMBER!

PARTIAL views are always misleading. Only the whole truth is really the truth. Half truths are frequently the most dangerous sort of error. I am thinking of a friend who said that only the failure of faith and prayer stood in the way of the recovery from sickness of one much beloved. Is this not a partial view of the function of faith and prayer thus expressed? Are faith and prayer just two long arms with which to reach into the treasures of God to get what we greatly desire? How often would I have used such long arms to seize what my heart longs for! But happily such power of control is in One with wider knowledge and greater wisdom than any mortal has. Real faith is to trust Him. Real prayer is fellowship with Him. The sovereign knowledge and love of God are no fiction.

Drawing general conclusions from special cases of healing is both wrong exegesis and faulty logic. Paul did some wonderful things, but he drew no general truths from these deeds with respect to healing. He healed the cripple at Lystra; relieved the afflicted in the island; healed the sick at Ephesus. Yet he had a thorn in his flesh; suffered with cold and pains in prison and was ministered to by his own "beloved physician," Luke. The people who wrought wondrous healing for others were ever ready to sacrifice life for

what they considered more precious. Modern healers are not so sacrificial.

The logic that enough faith will heal the sick would bring about the end of death. Such power would produce immediate chaos in the moral world. A little sooner or a little later death comes to us all. Life here and hereafter is in His keeping. There have been times when I would have snatched from Him that power if I could; but in my sober moments I am glad I cannot. Faith and prayer do not so much get things for us as they bring us into wonderful union with Christ. Job, of old, had the right view of this matter when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." We are living in days when there are many extremes, and we must remember to read the whole story and get the whole truth. We need to live in the upper stories of life where the outlook is wide and the view clear. Basement windows are too close to the ground and darkened.

61

A PROBLEM WHICH BELONGS TO US ALL

THE financial problem of a church is not the simplest when its details are seen. There are so many people to think about; so many angles to consider. Most members of the church have opinions on this subject on which they put a great deal of stress. They wonder why things are not done this way or that. But the officials are faced with very definite and concrete responsibility. The problem has been discussed all the way down from the beginning; and an inspection of the "good old days" is not at all convincing. Just how to meet the needs of the church fully and equitably, in the spirit of brotherhood and observing the laws of stewardship, is the problem the church is trying to solve. Any plan requires the coöperation, fully and heartily, of the members of the church family. A poor plan works pretty well with coöperation. A good plan works poorly without it.

The Every Member Plan is the method the whole Church has reached with practical unanimity. It aims to reach every member with the fact of responsibility. It makes an appeal to every one according to his ability. It seeks to provide for every cause according to the need. Because the Church has a weekly expense account it plans for a weekly income. Because giving to God is an act of worship, the offering is presented during the services. Because order and system

are everywhere taught, the attempt is made to have it on a sound business basis.

This year the officers in charge will try a new method of applying the Every Member Plan. They are loyal men and are giving time and thought to the cause of Christ. They have arranged for a congregational entertainment and social, Friday evening, February 8th. The entertainment is being taken care of by a man who knows how. The social hour and refreshments will follow. On this occasion the committee will present the budget for the coming year. The Every Member Canvass will be completed in a few minutes insofar as those present are concerned. The important thing is for every member to be present to hear about the budget and to ask any question that may arise. Let every loyal member of the Ninth Church family plan to be out February 8th.

62

SPEAKING OF HERESY AND SPLITS

THE talk of heresy and splits in the Church recalls former times. Church leaders today ought to read carefully both Scripture and Church history. For really there is nothing new under the sun even in heresy and Church splits. Most earnest people take themselves too seriously; and in proportion they understress the guiding hand of God. For one, I refuse to get excited. Most of the evil in the Church has not been from heresy, but from attempts to suppress it by force; force of one sort or another. The Spirit of God has a way of dealing with heresy if we will give Him a chance. After the smoke of battle clears away His flag is still there. For God is working His purpose out as year succeeds year. His Spirit is in the world to guide. It is our greatest privilege and duty to hear and follow Him.

There is a little scrap of our own history that is interesting. Ninth Church called the Rev. John Chambers to her pastorate in 1825. But he was considered theologically unsound and our presbytery refused to ordain him. However, he obtained ordination from the Congregational Association and served Ninth Church as an independent Presbyterian minister for a time. But this caused trouble. A division resulted and the courts gave the property to the minority. Whereupon the majority under Dr. Chambers organ-

ized the first Independent Church of Philadelphia. A building was erected at Broad and Sansom Streets. The years went on. But late in the life of Dr. Chambers both he and his church were received into the Presbytery. Still later his church was merged with another congregation and became the Chambers-Wylie Memorial Church.

At the time of his death, John Wanamaker was the vice-moderator of the Presbytery. His last appearance in presbytery was in the Chambers-Wylie Church. He was called to the chair and as he took the gavel and stood in front of the pulpit, given in memory of Dr. Chambers, he spoke tenderly of him. He spoke of the debt he owed to Dr. Chambers, greater than that to any other man. Then he stooped and kissed the memorial tenderly. I was much impressed; but I thought of that time when Presbytery had refused ordination to John Chambers, the beloved friend and pastor of John Wanamaker.

63

SPIRITUAL CONFUSION

AN intelligent layman, but one not versed in matters of church history or theology, was speaking to me recently about questions that had been raised in his mind by the acrimonious discussion of theological matters in the press. He said he was confused. He wanted to know if the Bible was not dependable; whether a man must really hold certain theories to be a Christian; whether the Church was slipping from her moorings.

A very wrong impression has been given by the theological wrangle in the press. It has been featured as news and has occupied leading headlines. But the rank and file of ministers and laymen are, as always, going along in a consistent way. They are not in the newspapers, for their ideas do not constitute news. A reporter recently called on me for an interview. But when he found I had no heresy to announce or theological opponent to excoriate he lost interest in me. He wanted news! I have a wide acquaintance of both ministers and laymen and those who are not soundly orthodox are exceedingly few. I am persuaded the heart of the Church was never sounder than at this hour. A lot of dust has been thrown in the air by a small faction of ultra-conservatives who insist that unless you sign on the dotted line of their interpretation you are not a Christian. There is a still

smaller group of liberalists who would abandon our historic position. The Presbyterian Church stands, and always will stand, for the integrity of the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and life. She stands, and always will, for that liberty of conscience in the Scriptures which her founders fought for and suffered for and wrote into her constitution.

The venerable Chauncey M. Depew says: "Everyone has a religious experience which goes deeper than mere theological discussion. The great mass of people accept the teaching about the birth of Christ and His divinity as they received it from their mothers. I entered Yale seventy-one years ago. New England was agog with the then new Transcendentalism. But the wave soon spent itself. These waves and winds of doctrines and discussions are ephemeral, transient." Mr. Depew says his pastor preaches Christ in His simplicity, purity and matchless power, which, he says, is "sufficient for this or any age!" And so He is!

64

"WHY WAS CHRIST BORN IN A STABLE?

I WAS once in a group of children when the Christmas story was being told. There is no other place equally good to hear the wonderful story as among the children. At the close one little girl with wide eyes asked, "Why was He born in a stable?" Her own little baby brother, she knew, had come in surroundings of comfort. Like a great new thing the incongruity of the Christ Child being born in a stable struck her. It wasn't in keeping, she thought.

The real reason, of course, is that He was crowded out. There was an inn in Bethlehem and there were many homes of comfort. But they were all occupied. We do not know who occupied the rooms in the inn that night, nor the comfortable homes. The register, if ever they had one at the inn, has long since perished. But I am not sure that some day we will not know more about the rooms of that inn and the homes of Bethlehem that night than we do now. There was no place for Him but a stable. He was crowded out!

Is not Christ still being crowded out? There was only one suitable place for Him in Bethlehem; the very best Bethlehem had! There is only one suitable place now—the very best we have! Christ would dwell in our hearts: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me!"

But how often He finds the inn of the soul thronged! He is crowded out! He must seek an outside shelter.

This Christmas season is a good time to ask what room you have given Christ. Is He crowded out of the place He would occupy in the inn of your life? Have you built Him a beautiful sanctuary of ritualism over against the room He would occupy? However beautiful, it is only a manger! Christ is crowded out! Have you built a creedal mansion in lieu of the room? It may be complete and ornate; but it is only a stable! Christ is crowded out! Believing things about Christ is not fundamental! Believing in Christ is fundamental! It is giving Him room! Bethlehem, however distinguished her guests that first Christmas night, lost her great opportunity! Make room!

65

"WHAT MEAN YE BY THIS SERVICE?"

MOSES was providing that the generations succeeding his should have an adequate understanding of that historical event we call the Passover. He realized the vast importance of the event in the life of the nation and in the spiritual history of the world. So he established the annual convocation. As time passed and new generations came on without the experiences and knowledge they would naturally ask, "What mean ye by this service?" Then the story of deliverance was to be recited. So it was with every passing year!

The Lord's Supper is for the new dispensation what the Passover was for the old. It arose from the greatest of all Passover nights and is itself an essential of the great story. The Scripture definitely joins the two in the statement, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Have we been as solicitous that our generations should understand what we mean by this service as were the people of the Old Testament? As a matter of fact, the Lord's Supper has been greatly obscured by people of partial views; or by theologians who seek a theory of elucidation for its spiritual mystery; or by ecclesiastics who have made it something different. The most obscuration, of course, is the Roman mass, which is idolatry. How clear and explicit is the statement of Paul: "The same night on

which Jesus was betrayed, he took bread"! Or the record of the Gospels: "This do in remembrance of me"!

What a pity it is that Christian people have let other voices speak on these spiritual matters than the voices of the Scripture! In 1824 our General Assembly described our Confession of Faith as "a summary of those divine truths which are diffused throughout the sacred volume," and as "a system of doctrine devised by men of sound learning from the oracles of God." But the world is full of "systems" which have been "devised" by men who are not of sound learning. Nothing has suffered more in the "devising" than the Lord's Supper. The purport of it is made as clear in the Scripture as that of the Passover! It commemorates His death! It promises His return! These are two great essentials we must not forget.

66

CONCERNING A DOG AND HIS NOSE

I HAVE a friend who is very fond of dogs. He talks of dogs on all occasions if there is the least opportunity. It is not a bad trait, provided it is not greatly out of proportion to weightier matters; for a man who likes a dog and knows how to treat and use him is usually a good man to be with. It seems he had arranged with a friend for an afternoon's tramp along hedgerows and through the brush with him and his dog, in search of game. The dog manifested remarkable powers in trailing game and a fine afternoon was in prospect. But at the first discharge of the gun the dog disappeared. After a time they saw him going across the field to the house. Coaxing and petting brought him back, but only for a little while. He was nowhere to be found. After a fruitless afternoon, so far as game was concerned, they returned to the house and there found the dog asleep in a box behind the stove. My friend waxed eloquent in telling the story and moralized on the dog's failure: "What a pity," he said, "that a dog like that should be endowed with such a good nose."

I have been thinking about that dog and his nose ever since I heard the story. I agree with my friend; it seems a pity that a dog with such a spirit should have such a nose! But I could not agree with the conclusion that he ought to be shot. That seemed like a

hasty judgment on the dog when you stop to consider; for I think we ought not to ask more of dogs and their talents than we do of people. We who have such higher endowment than a dog's nose ought to be patient with a recreant dog.

For that story set me wondering about the talents and opportunities and responsibilities of men. The Master seems to be depending on us. He has asked us to go before Him into the places where He Himself would come. The parable says: "For the Son of Man . . . gave to every man his work." And the work is indicated by the talent! What a wonderful equipment is the voice of song, and Christ claims it for Himself! Or the ability to teach; or to plan for the ongoing of the Church; or to lead in events as the need may be! If we ignore the call of Christ to service, are we not, however well we may please ourselves, really curled up in a box behind the stove?

67

WHAT IS YOUR FRACTION?

WHATEVER it is, you very likely think it is the whole instead of a part; most people do. Small philosophers, as well as great ones, are prone to believe their fraction the whole truth. It is not easy to rise to the plane of Paul and say with him, "Now we know in part!" How quickly bigotry would vanish from the Church if we would learn to distinguish between whole and partial truth! This contest as to who is right and who is wrong has been a long, sad story among Christian people.

One day in the late summer I was driving with a friend through New England. We had been discussing the recrudence of theological bitterness. Even the wonders of that out-of-doors could not keep it out of mind. Pointing across a valley to a barn against the mountain my friend said, "It is all there!" I looked, and there on the side of that barn was painted, "Christ died for our sins." It is the fact, not the elucidation, that is important.

But we have magnified the elucidation. Iranæus, of the second century, seized on the word "Ransom" and built a theory of elucidation on it. He said God gave the life of Christ as a ransom for the souls of men! Anselm, an early Latin father, took the word "Debt" as the key-word. He also built a theory. He said sin was infinite debt owed to God, and Jesus

in His death paid that debt. Luther, Calvin and others took the word "Propitiation." Man had broken the law and must be punished, but Jesus came in their stead and received the punishment. Then there is the governmental theory of Jonathan Edwards and the moral influence theory of Robertson and others which they base on the oft-repeated word "Example."

But they all deal in fractions. These are Scripture words, but all of them do not adequately elucidate the wonderful fact. Paul himself seemed to be reaching for a formula when he declared, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." How boundless that formula is! The eternal God in self-sacrifice for His wandering children. Paul, who saw so much of truth, said, "Which passeth understanding!" Let us have done with spiritual fractions and their friction. It takes the whole Word and all the best thought of all Christians even to approximate an adequate elucidation of the great Fact we saw printed on the barn against the mountain!

68

"OH! BUT I AM SO SINCERE!"

NO one could doubt her sincerity! She did not need to say it. But she was making a vital mistake when she thought she was right because she was so consciously sincere. And here is one of the most difficult spiritual conditions with which a pastor has to deal. Honest souls are led astray by the very intensity of their sincerity. Whether they see phantom or fact seems to make no difference. I was trying to show her where she was fundamentally wrong in what she was thinking; fundamentally wrong because unscriptural and non-Christian. During our conversation I said her course would lead her out of fellowship with Christ, out of Christian service and into spiritual unreality. She was shocked and exclaimed, "Oh, but I am so sincere!"

But the ignorant as a class are quite as sincere as the informed. Schools do not furnish sincerity, but information. Christ did not come to bring us sincerity, but truth. He came to teach us how to live and to mark the path; in fact, to be the path. Sincerity and ignorance have been loyal, but terrible yokefellows. Paul declares he had the same sincerity in killing Christians he had in preaching Christ. The mothers of India were sincere in casting their children into the sacred Ganges. Simeon Stylites illustrates quite as real a type of sincerity on top of his absurd pillar and

in his useless life there as does Justyn Martyr, who lived a Christian among men and died for Christ. The mother was sincere who let her baby die of diphtheria when anti-toxin was at hand to destroy the disease. The worshippers of relics are sincere enough, but theirs is an absurd devotion.

If sincerity justifies, then I know plenty of people who will be justified without Christ! If sincerity saves, then the heathen world needs no further Gospel! If sincerity is sufficient, then superstition is as good as the Gospel! Why can we not see that sincerity must be linked with truth? Sincerity drives us along the path we are following; but what about the path? Sincerity does not determine the path nor the terminus! It has little to do with conclusions. It is the truth that counts, not what we may think is truth, but Truth iself.

69

"AS THE CUSTOM OF SOME IS!"

THOSE who read the Scriptures are familiar with the expression, "Keep Services!" How often believers are enjoined to keep services! There was a reason for it then and the reason has not passed. The apostle was writing in a modern vein when he said, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the custom of some is." Church attendance was a problem, then, in apostolic times. The absence of some members was so regular that it had become a habit. The custom on Sunday was not to go to church, but to go somewhere else; to the games, to the country, or to idle the day away.

"As the custom of some is!" Some members of the church attend regularly the morning and evening services, while some are regular at the morning service only. Others may be counted on for the evening service. Others attend occasionally either morning or evening. Some have the habit still of going to the games or to the country, or to the shore, or to idle the day away. It is a habit not to keep services. The minister sees all this and thinks and wonders.

One Sunday afternoon a neighbor came to my boyhood home in Kansas. He had a letter from his father in the North of Ireland about which he wished to talk with my father. How clearly that scene still lives in my memory. The wood-yard where the two men met

and talked; the quiet of the Sabbath afternoon on the farm; the shimmering October sun on the prairie, reaching out to the horizon. This man, whose church letter had fallen to pieces in his trunk, who had drifted away from God, whose family had gone wrong, stood there asking, as he held the letter in his hand, "What shall I say to him?" The question the old father had asked was, "Do you attend services faithfully?"

Absence from service is the point at which spiritual declension begins. There is something gained in the assembly of believers that no devotional reading or listening in on the radio can supply. Keeping services is just as vital in Philadelphia as in Ephesus. Church-neglecting habits are just as damaging now as they were in the prairie country or in Asia Minor.

70

"OUR TIMES ARE BAD!"

THERE isn't any doubt about it; the times are bad. Some of the things we see and hear make us wonder whether people have wholly lost their moral bearings. We are sure some of them have! We wonder about the future! Effective church work is very difficult. The emphasis by young and old seems chiefly on material things.

But those who speak of the evil of our day often imply, if they do not assert, that former times were more spiritual; that we are losing out measured by the achievement of the past. This is a mistake easily made, for we do not know the past as we know the present. We enthuse about the "thatched cottage" of the past, but we forget about the pig-sty that was inevitably in the rear. We need the balance given by the historical sense. The General Assembly issued a pastoral letter to the churches in 1798 that contains this paragraph:

"Formidable innovations and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and religion. Scenes of bloodshed unexampled in the history of modern nations have convulsed the world, and our country is threatened with similar calamities. We perceive with pain and fearful apprehension a general dereliction of religious principle and practice among our fellow-citizens, a visible and prevailing impiety and contempt

for the laws and institutions of religion, and an abounding infidelity which, in many instances, tends to atheism. The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with a progress proportioned to our declension in religion. Profaneness, pride, luxury, injustice, intemperance, lewdness and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence abound."

That was 124 years ago. The same characterization might be made of almost any period. The unregenerate human heart is desperately wicked, according to the record of the years, as well as according to the word of the prophet. We do not look back to the good old days, but forward to the great Day! The earth has been full of evil as long as the memory of man runs. But the day is ahead when the earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea!

71

"ONLY A PREACHING GENIUS CAN DO THAT!"

THE ordinary preacher in attempting the impossible, according to current editorial comment, is in a bad way. He must "choose themes and speak on them twice a Sunday." He has "to provide perpetually new themes for which he has to collect his own material; no public speaker is so driven back on his own inner resources or so little helped by stimulus from the outside." Naturally enough it may be thought that only a "preaching genius" can do all that.

"A preaching genius!" what do they mean by that? One who draws a crowd? One who is facile with words and phrases? One who furnishes acceptable copy for the newspaper? Such is the modern thought without sustaining evidence in Scripture or accomplishment.

Preaching is a scriptural function. Nothing can take its place in the evangelization of the world. Scripture itself so affirms. "God has manifested his word through preaching." "It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" A "preaching genius" is foreign to the ministry of grace. There was no "preaching genius," as so understood, in the

Apostolic band; but, on the contrary, when the most discriminating and astute audience "saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." A "preaching genius" might be of use, but he is too liable to escape from his orbit and fly off on a tangent.

The Lord Jesus Christ in selecting His disciples directed them as to their spiritual equipment. They were to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be witnesses to Him to the uttermost parts of the earth. It takes no "preaching genius" to be an effective witness. Scripture and not the editors has the last word to say on preaching equipment. This editorial assumption is but another instance of the folly of well meaning people invading realms not their own and presuming to speak therein with authority.

72

"I WOULD HATE TO BE GUIDED BY THAT COMPASS"

I HAVE a pocket-knife designed for camp use. It has a number of things not found in the ordinary knife; one of these is a compass. One day I was turning it about, testing the compass, which was evidently untrue to the magnetic pole. The needle gyrated in a most unexpected way without any apparent cause. A young man standing nearby and watching the needle said, "I would hate to be guided by that compass. It would never get a fellow home."

But are not people being guided by agencies as irrational as my camp-knife compass? There is a Pole Star for the soul and it is constant! But conscience may become a foolish guide when a false pole star is arbitrarily set up in your moral universe. If it is love of money, you will be led into foolish and hurtful lusts, into the strangling waters of destruction and perdition, as Paul warns. If it is self-will, your conscience will be as whimsical in its indications as the needle which had lost its connection with the earth's magnetic system, or have just enough connection to produce foolish agitation. Peter describes such people as clouds driven by the tempest. If it is reason then, according to Job, your light will go out and you will fall. That sort of compass "never gets a fellow home!"

Christ is the Pole Star of the moral universe. He cannot be displaced without obscuring the points of the moral compass and producing moral chaos. The Bible gives the conscience the information needed to keep it true and reliable in its indications. There is no other way. The biographer of John Fiske says of Spencer, the rationalist, a lifelong friend of Darwin, "Biographical literature presents no parallel instance of a great mind going to its rest under circumstances of such profound sadness as accompanied the closing life of Spencer." His great powers of mind did not retrieve the mistake of a false relation to the Pole Star of the moral universe.

73

"THE BOOK"

IT was Sir Walter Scott who said, when he was rapidly approaching the last hour of his life, "Bring me the Book." When questioned as to what book, replied, "There is but one book, the Bible." It was a great judgment rendered by one of the greatest of all judges of books in an hour when real values emerge and will not be smothered. It is today "The Book" of all the world. It is the best seller every passing year. It is in every language and every vernacular. It is incomparable in its influence. And notwithstanding the confusion that makes a cloud about it through strife and bitterness, it holds on its way as the Book of God. It is amazing to read in history how the Roman Church and the English Crown joined all their resources to prevent the introduction into England of the translation of the New Testament by Tyndale into the language of the people. It is equally amazing, when we think about it, that we of today banish by neglect this mighty spiritual and moral dynamic from our homes and communities!

Never mind the critics. They come and go. The Bible has within its own lids the indisputable evidence of its own veracity. It is perfectly amazing how the Bible tells the defects of the men it exalts. In this it is entirely alone. It is hard for us to know the real Washington, for his biographers cover his defects.

But the Bible covers nothing. It reveals. A great acknowledgment of the spiritual power of the Bible was made by Coleridge when he said, "It finds me!" The answer to all criticism of the Scriptures is more of the Scriptures and better understanding of the Scriptures. You will remember the lines:

"Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking in I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
'To wear and batter all those hammers so?'
'Just one,' said he; then with a twinkling eye,
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know!'

"And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone."

Having such a Book producing such results in life, it is our duty and our privilege to put it into vital contact with as many lives as possible.

74

"WILLING TO BE A BACKGROUND"

ONE of the most intelligent musicians I have known once said to me in discussing a musical program, "A man must be willing to be a good background to be a good accompanist." I think I knew what he meant. It was one of those self-evident things he was saying not always seen by many of us. The background is vastly important in the production of any tone picture, and the creation of that background requires real ability. The singer has the message and the melody, but the song needs support. There are enriching harmonies to be supplied. Other tones in the chord must be brought in to enlarge and sustain the theme. It is the accompanist who makes the symphony. But he must be a background to do his work well. If he seeks to give his work the pre-eminence, if he is ambitious for praise, he serves his principal and himself both poorly. He fails to be a good background. I once saw Nordica take her accompanist by the hand and bring him with her on the stage to share the plaudits of the audience. She was acknowledging her indebtedness to the man willing to be her background.

This has a wider application than the musician meant. Backgrounds are essential in every sphere of life and in every great endeavor. Men of intelligence and spirit in the background of every institution are

essential to success. The performance of a great ship, her endurance in the storm, her finding the way over a trackless sea, her laying down the burden at the desired haven, is due in measure to the captain, but equally so to the men who make up the background of service. President McKinley went out of his way to thank the men of the Oregon who shoveled coal and cared for the engines in the hold of the vessel on her memorable run. He was giving only due valuation to the background. The Church needs a great company of faithful, intelligent men and women building the wonderful background that any successful administration must have. The church that is making the greatest contribution to the cause of Christ is the church with the best background builders.

The trouble with the disciples prior to Pentecost was an unwillingness to build in the background. They all wanted to play the principal rôle. That was the fatal weakness revealed on the way to the last Supper. Jesus pointed out that weakness and the remedy for it. He told them that the greatest in the Kingdom was the one who rendered the best service. Jesus Himself was willing to work down in the dark lane. It is this law which oftentimes promotes the woman who carries the water to the workmen building the temple above the architect who draws the plan. The King Himself calls His faithful ones out of the background in His own time.

75

"I SEEM TO BE ABLE TO NEGLECT THE CHURCH"

MY physician, who is to me more than a physician, was speaking. He had been observing the world of men and things for more than sixty years, and it is a privilege to see through his eyes and hear his judgments. His sayings are often quaint and full of wisdom. He sat facing me holding one of those cotton pointed instruments with which he administers healing potions. I have always enjoyed his conversations more than his treatments, and as a stay to the latter I asked him if he went to church yesterday, which was Sunday. The question effected the expected stay in his healing operation and opened a vein of reminiscence which was half confession. He said he had not gone to church on Sunday, although he had intended to. But the weather was not pleasant, and he was not feeling altogether right, and he got up a little late. He freely admitted the duty of church attendance and the loss he suffered from neglect of it. His well trained mind revolted from his line of excuses and he made the wholesome confession, "The fact is I seem able to neglect the Church."

He really does neglect the Church. He neglects it in a way more vital than he realizes. He is a good man and a Christian and does no end of good. I prize his friendship. He is a member of the Church and

always speaks well of it as an institution. He contributes to its support. But this beloved physician of mine does not go to any particular church. He goes here and there. Sometimes he is in a theatre meeting. Sometimes he goes to hear a special sermon, and again to hear special music. He loves good music and also a good sermon. He is bored by the commonplace in religion, but stands for it in medicine. It is quite possible to neglect the Church and still be somewhere within the sound of a service every Sunday.

He will not readily accept this latter statement, but it is true. We are constantly urged in the Scripture to keep services. That means to go to church somewhere, high church or low, cathedral, theatre meeting or mission chapel. But we are also told that we are members in particular of Christ's body. That means that a Christian has a membership function. It entails definite responsibility, a responsibility that we can meet only as we find our place and fill it. It is planned that we shall give as well as receive. The peripatetic idea of church attendance precludes a vital participation. We can best help the whole Church by being loyal and constant to our own particular congregation. My physician admitted I was right in this, as I expected he would.

76

"WANT GOOD FISHING?"

I WAS spending a few days with a friend at Twin Lakes in the top of the mountains of Pike County. It is a wonderful retreat, a good place to go. It is 1,500 feet above sea-level, an altitude that makes the summer nights cool. The place is sufficiently remote and difficult of access to retain until now a primitive charm that is alluring. There is much about Twin Lakes just as God made it. My friend has a charming cottage among the trees on the narrow strip of land between the lakes. It has not been desecrated by paint, the veneer of civilization, but still retains on its outer walls after these twenty years the bark that nature provided as a covering for the trees. Here and there a bit of bark has fallen from the clapboards, but the charm remains. That cottage seems like a part of the woods in which it stands. In the early evening we were idling about in a canoe in the quiet water and were about to pass through the bit of a channel, barely wide enough for our frail craft, that connects the two lakes. Over this channel there is a rustic bridge, and as we were about to pass under it I read this question and answer, done in enamel, "Want good fishing? Obey the law."

The State of Pennsylvania nailed that sign to the bridge where every fisherman visiting Twin Lakes would see it. It was a challenging statement. Even

in the sport of fishing men must play the game square to succeed. The law that regulates fishing is not tyrannical nor capricious. The State was thinking of the sport in view of all who might come that way; it had tomorrow in view as well as today. Therefore the law imposed limitations and regulations. A fisherman might not do just as he pleased. For every fisherman to do just as he pleased would ruin the sport for everybody, themselves included. The greatest good for the greatest number is a good rule even in fishing.

But as we drifted through the channel into the smaller and deeper lake I thought of One who would teach us to fish in another realm and regulate our conduct. There is something about the woods and the lakes that recalls to mind the Christ who loved Galilee. I have never seen Galilee, but it does not compare in beauty with Twin Lakes nestled on the high hills of our beloved State. "I will make you fishers of men," He said. "Want good fishing?" Then follow Him! Obey His law, which is the law of love. Do not think only and always of self. Let the Spirit of Christ have His way in your mind and heart. Then will you want good fishing and you will have it. Your craft will be filled to sinking.

77

"IF WORDS WERE BIRDS"

I USED to see the tumble weeds scudding across the prairie driven by the high wind. They went singly and in companies, some lagging behind in the race across the wide, open prairie. I used to think of them as couriers on some mission for the unseen, mysterious power of the wind. These tumble weeds were about the size of a bushel basket and about the same shape. They grew with a shallow root, and when the summer was ended and the frost came they were very light and dry as tinder. The wind easily uprooted them and sent them scurrying across the open landscape. It was great sport to catch these messengers of the wind, set them on fire and release and watch them go on as rolling balls of fire. They made it difficult to stop the progress of a prairie fire because they easily carried the fire across any area burned or plowed for protection. They have been the fiery messengers of destruction for many hay-ricks.

I thought of these tumble weeds on reading recently of a London clergyman who was charged with having violently dragged his wife from a certain meeting and having compelled her to return home with him. The clergyman made no defense for a time, but finally issued the following denial: "In the first place I never attempted to influence my wife in her views. Secondly, my wife did not attend the meeting in question.

In the third place, I did not attend the meeting myself; neither my wife nor myself had any inclination to go. Finally, I never had a wife." Yet even that denial would be slow in overtaking the blazing tumble weed that someone had set loose in the wind. It is a comfort to know that we are responsible for what we do and say, not for what people say we do or say.

Anyone can start a rumor, sow a suspicion or spread a report. It is the easiest thing in the world to do and one of the worst. Like the burning tumble weed, it leaves only ashes in its wake. The thrill of delight at the blazing thing is poor compensation for the burned hay-ricks. Civilization put the tumble weeds out of the landscape, but only the grace of God can quench the fire of their spiritual counterpart.

"If words were birds and swiftly flew
From tips of lips owned, dear, by you,
Would they today be hawks or crows
Or true and blue and sweet? Who knows?
Let's play today we choose the best,
Birds true and blue with dove-like breasts!
'Tis queer, my dear, we never knew
That words, like birds, had wings and flew."

78

"WE WILL BEGIN TO BUILD TOMORROW"

THE pioneers of the West built their towns of pine lumber, such lumber as is all but unobtainable now at any price. Stores, churches, schools and dwellings were built by the same faultless and fragrant pine. All over the prairie villages sprang into being. These buildings were quickly erected, but if a defective flue gave the touch of fire they were more quickly reduced. In our village two large stores were built, or they seemed large to me. One of these, occupied as a general store, was owned by a Presbyterian elder. I remember when he came, for we were in the community ahead of him. He still lives in the village and his place of business is on the same corner and he is still an elder in the village church. I like to look over the report of his synod and run down the list of elders until I come to the name of McCarthy, for that is his name.

One summer evening a glare was reflected in the darkening sky and we knew that some building was on fire. It proved to be his store. Great tongues of flame were soon reaching up into the dark sky. What a sight it was to me! How that splendid pine gave voice to the flame in the joy of burning! Making my way through the crowd which was watching this sight, I came upon Mr. McCarthy. Someone had evidently been asking him about the future, for I heard him say,

"We will begin to build tomorrow." His quiet manner made an impression on me that I have never lost. To my boy eyes he looked big that night in the glare of his burning store. He could face difficulties as a true pioneer. And I remembered that he had suffered a raid by the notorious Poke Wells, associate of Jesse James, who had taken a large sum of money, desperately scarce in that new country. How that raid had frightened the small boys and made every shadow in the night look like a bandit. Now, Mr. McCarthy was watching his store burn and quietly saying, "We will begin to build tomorrow."

I have never changed my mind about this man. I have kept the admiration of my boyhood for this village merchant who is one of the most honored citizens of the State. He is old now, but he still faces problems in the Christian way. In the pageantry of the years God gives some hard things. There is benefit in both the rising and setting of the sun. Winter as well as summer has its blessings. That which seems like misfortune can never overwhelm the soul that understands the moral purpose of life. From the ashes of today a better tomorrow will come. There is no horizon but lifts as a true man approaches it. The path by the still waters is wonderful, but it alone does not make a complete or rugged life.

79

EVERY ONE SOMETHING TO DO

WE were sitting around the table at the manse, one evening after the service, having some light refreshments. In the company were some friends who had dropped in casually. They represented different groups. It was a care-free time at the close of the day. The pastor was weary, for the day had been hard and nervously exacting. He was listening to the discussion without taking much part in it. The sermons were evaluated. Things wrong were asterisked. Questions were turned in the direction of the pastor which he did not answer; had no wisdom to answer. One of the company summed things up in the remark, "The pastor should give every one something to do." That brought him into the conversation to ask How? and What? But there was no answer to either question.

The genius of Christian service is stated by our Lord when He said, "For the Son of Man . . . gave to every man his task." No member of the church is supposed to be unemployed. There is no provision for an idle class. But what shall be the task for a specific individual? He might be asked to act as an elder, a trustee, an usher, a secretary, singer or song leader. The Every Member Canvass requires a good many people. The various organizations require a good many more. But it is immediately evident to one

thinking all around the matter that such things cannot give every one something to do. Those fitted for these things should be assigned to them; and they usually are. This still leaves the body of the church unemployed.

Yet the Son of Man gave to every man his task! He means that every Christian shall be busy. When you search His message for your instructions you will find something very definite. You will find that you have been given a ministry of intercession. To fail here is fatal. You will find that you have been given a ministry of stewardship, very definitely assigned. You are commissioned to administer a separated and proportionate amount of the wealth God has given you for the ongoing of His work. This is a partnership with God. You will find that you are commissioned to witness for Him. You are to tell others of Jesus. You are to seek men and women for Christ and the Church. If you refuse this ministry, nothing else can possibly constitute service. Eldership, trusteeship, secretaryship, and all the rest are but sounding brass. If you receive and fill your commission from Him, it is a small matter to you whether or not you are asked to do some of the incidental errands of the external organization. The Master Workman is Christ, and it is He who assigns the tasks.

80

"NOW CONCERNING THE COLLECTIONS"

THERE is nothing more unscriptural or un-Christian than the divorcement of the religion of the heart and the wealth of the hand. God has joined them together and the act of separation produces spiritual ruin all around the horizon of the soul. It is all right not to let the right hand know what the left hand does under certain conditions, but it is fatal to keep the ministry of the hand separated from the religion of the heart. The hymn lines, "Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling," set forth spiritual truth. But the Spirit says, "Come into his courts and bring an offering with you." The hand that is not serving the faith of the heart will not long have power to cling to the cross.

Religious questions have a way of coming around to the treasury. The man who makes no provision for his home need not talk of love for wife or children. If the element of stewardship is omitted from worship or discipleship, either is without meaning or power. Late in the afternoon of that last tragic day in the Temple, Jesus went over to the treasury and watched the people casting in their gifts. Here was the point at which spiritual reality emerged. He had been charging the leaders with hypocrisy. At the treasury He found a demonstration. Their profession was not backed up by the record of the treasury. How can

the great Presbyterian Church make claim of being in love with Christ when she does not rise to the level of five cents a day per member for His cause? I think Christ must be still standing over against the treasury watching. I am wondering if He is saying again, " Lovest thou me? "

Paul, writing that wonderful chapter on the resurrection, closing with " O grave, where is thy victory? " Then he drops into the statement, " Now concerning the collections! " Drops? No; rises! For if Christ did so much, we should rejoice that there is something for us to do. He continues: " Upon the first day of the week," which indicates the weekly offering. The weekly payment keeps the interest constant, is more easily made and interweaves the offering with worship. " Let each of you," means the every member plan. It took the Church a long time to come up to Paul's position. We are only beginning to see every-member responsibility. " Lay by him in store as God hath prospered," establishes the rule of proportionate giving. The rich with large gifts; the poor with small. Each proportionate. The widow's mite was larger in proportion, therefore spiritually larger. In these days of need let us neither underrate the Church of Christ nor divorce the religion of our hearts from the ministry of our hands.

81

"HE GIVETH THE SNOW LIKE WOOL!"

"IT is snowing," my friend said as we parted at the doorway of his place of business. As I looked into the leaden afternoon sky I observed occasional flakes fluttering down to the street. How insignificant these fugitive flakes seemed, but as I made my way in the throng they were rapidly increasing. An enormous flake fell on my sleeve and I could not help observing its beauty, its stainless purity. It seemed like a messenger out of the sky to the city, stained and sordid. I could all but trace the outline of the six-rayed star of this crystal of the storm. I remembered how beautiful and wonderful in structure the snow crystal was under the lens which gave the eye a chance to really see it. It was an understanding mind that gave to snow the name, "The Beautiful." I was soon covered with flakes; and this morning when I awoke the city was snowbound, locked in the grip of snow crystals.

How a blanket of snow changes the face of the landscape! The old rail fence becomes a work of art. Shrubs take on a new and picturesque charm. The whole world seems transferred into a spiritual realm. The stain and soil of the city are buried by the crystal coverlet that God has let down out of the sky. The unsightliness of the unsightly is taken away. I remember with what joy I used to go to the woods on snowy days. Every bush was more beautiful than a

Christmas tree. The great arms of the trees were festooned with snow. Ferns took on the patterns of fine lace. Tufts of white bulged from every projection. The creatures of the woods nestled in their snowy retreats under the weighted bushes. Wonderful is the sight and the silence of the woods on a snowy day. All this is in the gentler moods. But this same snow crystal defeated Napoleon. In them God sifted destruction upon his invincible army. The wind gathers them in its embrace and carries them into banks that close the highway and annul the schedule of the mightiest express. The gale lets them fly from the string of his bow against the face of the traveler.

As I looked out on our snowbound city I thought of the Scripture, "He giveth the snow like wool." For the snow covers the fields during the winter sleep when energies are recuperated. God spreads a blanket over the wheat to protect it against the frost. Snow, like wool, is a poor conductor and makes a wonderful blanket for the field that is resting and the life that is waiting for the spring. "He giveth the snow" and, like the Manna, there is life in it. Even the snow through which we laboriously walk, whose crystals are soon crushed, which is soon unsightly with the soil of the street, tells us of the wonders and love of God.

82

"THIS MEANS CRIPPLING THE BOARD!"

THE mail bag of the minister these days is not only a large affair, but it is weighted with moral issues. It contains all that the mail bag of others have and in larger proportion. There are invitations and announcements and requests for endorsement and recommendation. There are letters from travelers on land and sea; letters telling you you have helped and letters telling you how to help. There are letters from the aged and from little children. But the minister's mail bag is filled with letters from those who are trying to carry the lines of the Kingdom forward. This morning there were eight such letters in my mail. In a very definite way they lay their burden on the minister's mind and heart. Would you throw them in the waste-basket? You say you would! But you would not if you were a minister. They would pull you into the waste-basket with them if you did.

This morning I read carefully a letter from the chairman of the Presbyterial Committee on our Board of Christian Education. The fact is I read it several times. It was a strong, an urgent appeal for support on the part of our ministers and churches for this agency of our church. Our people are not poor. Nor is the complaint that our people do not give. But there is a lack of discrimination in giving. Here is a board carrying on the most vital work of our Church,

and yet it is burdened and worried and weakened by debt. In a strong document recently our General Council urged Presbyterians to support our own Presbyterian agencies first. Who else will if we do not? Our trustees are urging, and rightly so, that congregational responsibilities are primary. A man who does not loyally support his home church will have little standing in a court of real benevolence. The folks who do most for their own church are the ones who also support the larger work of the Kingdom.

This letter said the board would be crippled! And I thought of a musician whose hand was crippled; of an athlete whose foot was crippled; of the general with a crippled army. But this is our own Board of Christian Education! We are allowing it to be crippled! The board that works at the heart of things Christian! It is easily within our power to save this crippling. It requires no sacrifice, no heroic effort. It requires only a little love of Christ, only a little of His purpose. To see just what I mean, calculate your daily gift to the cause of Christ, and compare it with other things. I am expecting to send my personal check to this board of our church, and if any of you want to add yours to mine, let me know.

83

"A NEW HITCH IN YOUR BELT"

I HAD a letter, the other day, written in the scrawl of a very busy man. You would feel, in reading the letter, that the writer was a man of deeds with not too many words. He suggested to me that I should take a new hitch in my belt. I do not wear a belt after the manner of most men, but I think I know what he meant. We must take a man for what he means these figurative days rather than for what he says. Someone was once pressing Dr. John Davis, of Princeton, for an answer as to whether the Bible meant what it said. He answered with fine discrimination, "The Bible means what it means." So it is with my friend and his advice about the belt. When a man has a load to carry, heavier than usual, he takes a hitch in his belt. Or when he is confronted with a difficulty he did not expect, or a situation that is not clear, he takes really or figuratively a hitch in his belt —that is, the real man does. And right well did I know that the writer of that letter was giving me a page out of his own experience, for he has been carrying through a most difficult task for one of our greatest corporations.

The beginning of a new church year is the time for people to take a hitch in the congregational belt. Some things have gone wrong in the year that is closed. Some things have not come up to standard. Some

people have not kept faith with the church nor the Faith with Christ. It is always so, has always been so and always will be so while human nature is as it is. Some people are not pleased with what other people do. How could it be otherwise when we are different? But people would not be so displeased with other people who are different if they could realize that this variety enriches and empowers life. Then at the beginning of the church year we face new tasks. There is nothing new about them except the new hold we take. It gives us an opportunity to get a new perspective. These tasks which the Master assigned are so long and so changeless that we must always be taking a new hitch. They seem impossible of accomplishment, but men who undertake them and keep their belts tight have always been able to accomplish the impossible.

The annual meeting is only the crossing of an imaginary line. Yet that line is not really imaginary. You cannot see a state line, but it is there. Nor can you see the equator, but it is there. Each plays an important part in administration. We are girding ourselves for another year. We are not any stronger than the manhood and womanhood that constitute our membership; but we are as strong. There is no limit to the things we can do in the Lord except the limit we ourselves place. Standing in your own place, will you not help in this new year?

84

"SEE THE SCARS ON THE TREES!"

VERMONT used to seem a long way off. Lying between were junction points and transfers of one sort or another. The same number of miles intervenes now as always, but a direct line with no change makes it seem nearer. The railroads are learning this lesson and are running through trains and selling through tickets. But the direct line with the strongest appeal is the thread of cement that runs by your door to the mountains and valleys that haunt the memory. And what a ride it is when there is good company and no hurry! North Jersey, the Catskills and the Hudson River afford a continuous wonderland and before you know it you are coming into Bennington and passing through the gateway to the Green Mountains. There is usually an argument whether the car shall turn east through the Berkshires over the Mohawk Trail or whether the course shall be northward through the valleys of the Green Mountains.

Among these wonderful mountains of Vermont I have a friend who owns a "farm." It lies well up on the side of the mountain and is beautiful for situation. Below it lies the valley and beyond the valley rises a majestic range. I have seen the moon rise over those mountains, and what a sight it is! In the early morning the belated clouds come floating down the

valley. They seem too heavily weighted to rise over the summit and are entangled and broken up on the side of the mountain. Out of this mountain farm flows a perfectly wonderful spring. A great volume of cold water comes gushing from the earth and goes noisily on its way to join the river in the valley. My friend loves this place and I do not wonder. He has an intimate and friendly acquaintance with the flowers and trees. The birds he regards as his summer guests.

One day we were standing by his big spring and he was speaking of his trees. There they were all about us. He told me he had two thousand sugar maples on his mountain side. I asked him if they were producing, and he replied, "Surely. See the scars on the trees!" There the scars were. The augur had pierced the body of the trees and the taps had been driven in. There could be no sugar without the scars. As I looked at those wonderful trees it seemed to me that they had joined the fraternity of God. Every scar was a badge of service. The trees distilled the sweet liquid through their wounds. There were distinct scars on the life of Paul that came out of service. There were scars on the hands of the Saviour when He left the earth that belonged to His mission. I am not surprised that the winter seems long to my friend, when the city and its suffering claim him. But perhaps he wins here the scar, the badge of service, worn by his own beloved maples.

85

"NO BIGGER THAN YOUR LIEUTENANTS"

WE were sitting in his den, just the two of us. I had called in the late evening by special appointment and we were discussing many things as men will when conversation runs free. The man who talks forms an impression of the man who listens; for there is a way to listen. And the man who listens forms an impression of the man who talks; for speech betrays much not in the spoken words now as well as in the day of Simon Peter. This man of large affairs and this minister of the Gospel had a good time together as the evening merged into night. I felt that his business problems weighed upon him, made him thoughtful and careful in speech. I believed that only the best methods and policies would receive his consideration. We were discussing his problems and mine; his task and mine. He was saying that it was increasingly difficult to do business. I was saying that it was increasingly difficult to manage a church and do the work of a minister, pastor and evangelist.

Looking at me with the light of experience in his eyes he said, "You are no bigger than your lieutenants." He was thinking of his business, of production, of salesmanship, of management. It was a self-evident truth when he lifted it out of the mass of confusing details. It is evident that the greatest and most fertile superintendent cannot win for his organ-

ization unless he has capable and loyal lieutenants along the line to the last man. Great business institutions have discovered this principle and proceed upon it. One walking through a modern store or reading the advertisement discovers that the superintendent knows he is no bigger than his lieutenants.

In a rather pointed way he applied his business adage to me and the church. It is true that a minister must be big to succeed, but he can be no bigger in his work than his lieutenants. He is the responsible head, but he must depend on his committees and agencies. They make success possible. One thing my friend did not realize as a difference between his case and mine. He picks men from the widest fields because of fitness for their assignments and pays them well in the coin of the realm. The minister's lieutenants are seldom specialists, cannot be in the nature of the case, and they render service without compensation. As we sat together in the shaded light talking of these things I remembered that even the Master was limited in His ministry by those with whom He labored; not many mighty works through lack of faith and vision! In a definite way He was not, and is not, bigger than His lieutenants.

86

"WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THE STONE?"

I HAD bought a ticket that promised me a ride out of the city and over the mountains to Wilkes-Barre. It did not cost much for what was promised. The performance of a modern railway is wonderful when you come to think of it. I was thinking of this as our comfortable train was passing out of the city and making its hurried way across to Bethlehem. Here our train was joined with a train from New York and we were soon speeding up the winding course of the Lehigh River. The river and the mountains are at their worst in March. The river is muddy and swollen; the fields are naked, and the mountains are just big, ugly and oozy. The big out-of-doors is in the first stage of awakening and is unkempt and tousled. March is neither winter nor spring; neither sleep nor waking.

But our fine train did not seem to mind. It went along just as if the stream was sparkling and the mountains beautiful with summer colors. The rhythm of the wheels seemed to be saying that everything would be beautiful after awhile. We had two big engines at the task, and it was a pleasure to see those powerful machines sweep around the curves of the river, dragging their heavy train. On the plains the passenger seldom gets a sight of the engine. He does not see the wheels go around. But the Lehigh River

bends the train to right and left in a charming way, showing first one side and then the other of the laboring engines. At a point where there was a wide curve I discovered a semaphore set against us. No engine driver in his right mind disobeys the stop signal of that bit of mechanism, and we came to a stop in the narrow valley. The stop lengthened and finally word came through the train that a great rock from the mountain was lying across the track.

It was near Easter and the Easter fact was in my mind. Perhaps this is the reason the question of that early morning came to me, "Who shall roll away the stone?" I knew it was not my responsibility or task. The ticket I held promised me an open way across the range. So I sat comfortably in the car with my book while the company met the emergency. After an hour that semaphore arm dropped, indicating that the way was open. As we passed, I saw the stone which had blocked our way, and it was enormous, but it had been rolled from the path of the train. So it was with the stone of the Easter morning. It was not in the way of Christ. It was not rolled away to let Christ out, but to let us see in. It was obstructing Faith's right of way. God sent His strong angel to clear the way. I was still thinking of these things when we drew into Wilkes-Barre and I found my friends waiting for me. The company had kept faith with me in the matter of the open way. And so will God.

87

"ISN'T THAT LOVELY?"

THE Sunday School provides flowers for the Easter service of the church. I have wondered why the children should do this, for the expense is something of a tax on their treasury. But consideration brings the suggestion that it is fitting for youth to express the Easter thought in flowers. Older folks need the brighter language of flowers so easily spoken by youth. But it requires more than a gift of money to decorate a sanctuary in a fitting way for Easter. Someone must have it in charge, visit the florists and spend time in selection and arrangement. Our Easter flowers were beautiful and in the best taste. We were too late in the market to get the best palms or many of them. But good taste can always take the place of quantity. Twelve lilies were chosen, each for its bearing and the number of blooms it carried. These were placed in groups of three with a dainty bush of pink roses between each group. With the rich background of the choir enclosure and a couple of palms at either side, the church never looked more beautiful. The sight of it must have repaid those who labored for the result.

The afternoon before Easter a wedding party came to the church. The doors were opened to their friends and guests. The organ gave forth the familiar strains of the wedding march. Up the aisle of the beautiful

church came the young people to the marriage altar, the bride upon the arm of her father. What a sight the wedding processional is! No element of good taste or beauty ever seems to be omitted. I do not wonder that the children beg for admission to the gallery, a petition I am always glad to grant. When the bride saw the beautiful flowers arranged for the Easter service, she exclaimed: "Isn't that lovely?" They were for the Easter service, but how wonderfully they served for the afternoon wedding without any detraction from their beauty on Easter morning! The joy given to the bride in adding such beauty to her wedding was without extra cost or labor. Beautiful flowers gathered for others brightened the wayside she was traveling.

I thought of a beautiful yard across from the manse where I once lived in which were flowers and trees. Every time I looked from my library window the sight filled my eyes. I had the benefit without detracting from the pleasure of the owner who had planned it all, whose generosity kept it up. But is not this just what God is always doing for us? The night sky, the woodland, the mountains and the valleys! How they brighten our way without cost to us! And our enjoyment detracts nothing from others. This must have been in the mind of Jesus, along with other things, when He said, "Others have labored and ye are entered into their labor."

88

WHEN THE SHIP CAME HOME

OF the twenty-two camps in which I served during the war for the National Service Commission for the Y. M. C. A., the last was Camp Stuart, at Newport News, Va. This was in May, 1919, and the war was over. That fact made everything different. It was one thing to talk to boys who were to leave some time in the night for the battlefields of France and another thing to talk to boys bound home from those horrors, detained in camp only long enough for demobilization. It was all but impossible to get attention for anything except going home. Services that were packed while the troops were going over were deserted when the troops were on the way home. I have had many a thought about that experience at Camp Stuart and the changed attitude toward the externals of religion.

One day while I was there a transport came silently to dock. I stood at a point of vantage and watched the great ship come in. What an interminable line of march came from that ship. Khaki-clad boys came out ladened with all sorts of equipment, victors they were, grim and silent. Thousands stood along the way to welcome these soldiers home from the great task. Not much was said, but in all eyes there were tears, eloquent of unspoken thoughts. Finally the last came! No, not the last, for there was another army

in that silent ship. Slowly it came forth, the wounded and sick on stretchers, the crippled on crutches. Lean and gaunt were these boys. Their flesh had been torn by the fangs of war. They had gone out whole, they were limping back fractions. They had gone out fit. I had seen some of them at Funston and Custer. They are being carried back home. The shouting and fighting are over, but part of war's toll is only too evident in this ghastly march. Then that ship dissolved and in its place came the fields of France, furrowed by infinite rows of the dead, those who had paid in full the supreme exaction of the law of hate in operation. Those silent fields belonged to the picture to give it depth and perspective and background, to make it real! Ah, God, how real!

It was with a state of mind hard to describe that I watched and thought. Here was victory, but not victory to shout over. It had cut its cost-mark in the face of youth. I felt then and I feel now how impossible it was to fit what I was seeing into a picture of Christ. He came revealing the law of love as the law of life. If men will fly in the face of that law, what I was seeing will forever recur. Men will be broken who fall upon it, or ground to powder if it falls upon them. His Gospel brings men under the sway of this law. It gives victory without loss and riches without sorrow. The will of the Father who sent Christ was hard to see that day at Newport News.

89

THE SPIRIT OF MOTHERHOOD

IT is a beautiful spirit that has its abode in motherhood. It puts a look of kindness in her eyes and gentle, healing words upon her lips. It bends her form over her sleeping babe and gives sweetness to her voice when she sings. It clothes her with an indefinable grace and crowns her womanhood with something of divinity. There is a shadow of truth in the saying that God could not be everywhere so He gave us mothers. Motherhood brings back memories of quiet Sabbath afternoons, of bedtime stories, of home ties that bind all through the years. Motherhood has unfailing love. Despair cannot destroy her hope. The spirit of motherhood is the spirit of service, of self-denial, of vicarious suffering. The Scriptures illuminate it in the statement, "And there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." It is the way of mothers. The spirit of motherhood is indomitable. The providence of God elected that Israel's great lawgiver should be nourished in his father's house, taught and inspired by his mother.

How personal the spirit of motherhood is! A gracious face incarnates motherhood to us all. As I write one comes to me. I can hear her voice and see her face and the light in her eyes. I can see her in the earlier days when I was a child and in those later years when time had woven a mantle of age about her.

Her life must have been difficult as I think of it now, but it did not occur to me in those days. She was a part of us in her life and thought. I can see now that things did not break well for her comfort. Her life was one of sacrifice. I seldom saw her in silk, but her heart was always clothed in fine linen. She never pitied herself nor complained. She was mother and nurse and housekeeper for a large family. She mended and darned and cooked. Through it all she had a song and a cheery word. She of all I ever knew fulfilled the Scripture, "They shall walk and not faint." Only sickness or inclement weather kept her from any church service. Morning and evening service, the Sunday-school, the mid-week service she claimed for her own. As I stood at her grave awhile ago and thought it all over I found myself saying, "Mother, how did you do it?"

What a spirit is the spirit of motherhood! She asks not one thing in return for all her service and suffering through days and nights that are long and weary, but appreciation. And even that may be delayed if only she is conscious of the love of those whom she serves. It helps a man to keep his head up when the day is dark to realize that his mother knew, knew for sure, that he loved her.

90

"I SUPPOSE GOD HAS A PLAN"

I WAS discussing with a friend ways and means for a successful church. He had been offering some rather caustic criticism and explained his idea of how a church should be run. He was a man of intelligence and had been thinking about what he was saying. But the plan he outlined might be applied to a club or a secret society as readily as to a church. He failed to take into account any promise God might have made to the Church and he left no place in his thinking for the Holy Spirit. Yet the place of the Holy Spirit in the Church is clearly indicated in the phrase, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." That primacy of the Spirit my friend had entirely overlooked.

When I called attention to the fact that the Church was working under a special commission, had special promises, was put definitely under control of the Holy Spirit, he replied, "Well, I suppose God has a plan for His Church." That is just the difficulty. God has a plan for His Church, and it can function on no other. All the wisdom of the world cannot take the place of the word God has given. When the plans of men take the place of the plan of God, the Church becomes a club, whatever name may be over the front door. The New Testament Church was a Church of the Holy Spirit. It was commissioned to wait until it was en-

dowed with the power of the Holy Spirit. After that the disciples were to witness for Christ at home and abroad. They were to teach, preach and make disciples to the ends of the earth. The trouble with my friend was that he had lost the spiritual truth of the Church, the mission, the secret of power, the primacy of the Holy Spirit. His was a static organization which would sink under political or social convulsions. The Church of the Scriptures is a God-equipped organization that rides out all storms and overcomes all difficulties.

God's plan for the Church does not discount men. There is a wonderful blending of the divine and human. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us!" God wants men to use their minds, their hearts, their best influence for the ongoing of the Church. The Holy Spirit never faces men the wrong way, never uses wrong business methods, never approves petty measures. It is a great combination, "the Holy Spirit and us"! It is a combination underwritten with truth and power and victory. Every intelligent advance succeeds in the Church as in business. Faith looks forward, counts on God, believes in victory, takes God at His Word. That which we need to wait for is the Spirit. That which we need to avoid is the break with God.

91

"THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING"

YESTERDAY a wonderful thing happened in the sky. The moon came between the earth and sun and made a path of darkness across the land. New Haven being in the center of the path, astronomers gathered in this college town to observe and make records. The belt of darkness was about 100 miles wide and lasted for about two minutes at the center. The value to science of that two minutes was great. Lights were extinguished that the spectacle might be seen at its best for this film of the sky could not be reproduced. What confidence these astronomers have in the sun and moon keeping their appointment at New Haven! The announcement was made in terms of seconds. The next total eclipse to visit our land will be in 1954, and the longest eclipse in human history is announced for July 5, 2168. What a schedule these mighty celestial bodies have and there are no delays and no annulments. The scientists are justified in counting on God's appointments in the sky.

People who live by the sea miss half the glory of the heavens. The higher and drier altitudes have more wonderful stars and a deeper and more wonderful sky. Where David lived, the night sky glowed with living sapphires and the milky way was a "circling zone powdered with stars." I am grateful

for those nights on the plains when the heavens were declaring to me the glory of God in a way that could not be withstood. Then when I learned from science that some of these glorious stars are many million times greater than our sun; that some of them were so far away that light traveling 186,000 miles a second requires many thousand years to reach us, the message is overwhelming. Who of us can believe the universe is automatic? It is not a haphazard aggregation but a wonderful cosmos, the product of an infinite mind.

I remember that Jesus said, "Ye believe in God" in such a way as to exclude unbelief. The heavens are telling of God. Of course we believe in Him. But He went on to say, "In me also believe!" Jesus is just as evident in the moral world and just as essential as God is in the heavens! He is inescapable! He cannot be hid! The starry sky passes our understanding. We stand in awe in the quiet night. Paul was speaking for all of us when, contemplating the wonders of the incarnate Christ, he said, "which passeth understanding." I am more than willing for the mind that controls the vast bodies of the sky to control the issues of my life! He will keep His appointments with my soul!

92

WHO ARE WE?

THERE is no saving efficacy in church government, although churches must have organization as a means to an end. It is a strange thing that the Christian family is most conspicuously divided on polity. Members of the family are bad friends, not on matters of doctrine, but on matters of external organization. How to proceed has been greatly stressed. One searches the Scriptures in vain for such emphasis on polity as has been given. The adjective prefixed to the name has overshadowed the noun in the minds of common people. While it is needful to be loyal to our own congregation and denomination, yet the central loyalty is to Christ and His Church. It requires some knowledge of history to understand the present situation within the family of churches.

There are three types of church polity in existence, with extensive modifications of each type. These are the Prelactic, Presbyterian and Congregationalist. The ousttanding example of the prelactic is, of course, Romanism. The Episcopal and Methodist churches also belong to it. This polity ascribes to one man the right to rule the diocese. The bishop admits to membership and the bishop excludes. Authority is invested in the bishop. The Congregationalist polity holds that the congregation itself should exercise authority and that directly; that the pastor of the church should

exercise spiritual and official oversight, giving account to the congregation only.

The middle polity is that of Presbyterianism. We get our name from our polity. There is, however, a large group of churches holding the Presbyterian system that have other names. The central fact of Presbyterianism as a polity is government by presbyters, or elders. These are men chosen by the congregation to this office. They are then ordained and assume a heavy responsibility to be loyal and true both in life and office. These men under the presidency of the minister constitute the Session. This body is subject to the authority of the Presbytery, which is central in our Presbyterian system. The responsibility of the Session extends to every phase and item of the local church. Particular matters may be delegated to deacons or committees or trustees, but the Session is responsible. The highest courts of the land have invalidated any provision of any local charter that invades this fundamental of Presbyterianism. The Presbyterian system has been an effective agency to win and hold religious liberty. It is equally effective in stabilizing the Church in times of agitation.

93

A MAN ON CRUTCHES!

A MAN on crutches is a prima facie case of pedal inability. The crutches proclaim his weakness. Crutches are not ornaments nor a strong man's aid, but the symbol of his inability. I used to hear men speak of a valuable horse as "sound in wind and limb." A good Christian is not only able to talk but walk; he is able both to stand with his Lord in confession, and do the work called for by that confession. It is bad when a Christian is not able to walk without fainting. Talking and walking must go together! Spiritual crutches invalidate spiritual testimony.

For the validity of your testimony as a Christian depends on what you do. The talking and the walking may be, and often are, miles apart. That was the indictment Jesus brought against the Pharisees of His day. It was the thought in the mind of Jesus when He said to His disciples, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Profession and performance ought to be of the same sort. They ought to burn the same color. And this seemly fellowship of walking and talking in Christian discipleship runs all through life. We want performance as well as profession in our physician, our banker, our teacher. For our own good and for the advancement of His Kingdom, our Master asks it of us. We fool only ourselves when we divorce walking and talking.

I am not thinking about perfect men; I have never seen any. Dr. Grier, my beloved teacher, used to say, "When you find a man who is perfect, I advise you to lock up your silverware." I am thinking about the man who loves Jesus Christ and is trying to follow Him. It is not the big things which count most. It is the cup of cold water given; it is the daily task done with courage. Your wife, your husband, your servant know best whether your walk and talk agree!

Love for Christ will lead you to step across hindrances to real service for Him. Anything you can do to help your church in her immeasurably great task is service for Him. Love for Him floods your world of service with a great light. It takes away the drudgery. And there is no such thing as unappreciated service for Him. He knows and He cares!

94

"LIFT ME UP THAT I MAY SEE!"

I ONCE heard Margaret Slattery tell a story in a great Sunday-school convention I can never forget. It was a story of a little child in a crowded street. There was some great occasion in the town and the streets were thronged with people. A parade with bright banners was approaching, led by a band playing a lively air. There was excitement and everyone seemed intent on getting a position of vantage where the parade could be seen. Back in the crowd there was a little girl who had no chance to see. She was so small that the crowd shut her in. She said to one and another, "Lift me up that I may see!" But her appeal seemed to fall on deaf ears. People in that crowd were wanting to see for themselves. They did not want to bother with a strange little girl. Men and women were enjoying things for themselves. But at length a big workman with broad shoulders and a father's heart looked down into her face, heard her request and lifted her to his sholdrer above the crowd where she could see the passing show.

Is that not just the appeal of childhood everywhere? Life for them is like a crowded street and the throng shuts them in. They have no chance to see unless they are lifted on the broad shoulders of fatherhood or on the strong hearts of motherhood. That appeal is so often unheeded. Are we too tired or too busy to

lift them up? Or are we just indifferent and selfish? The crowded ways of life are stifling to the children. They may not realize it. Their lips may not say, "Lift me up that I may see." But their need is eloquent for them. Their helplessness calls to us. The trampling feet of the crowd in the ways of life challenge us. Everything in the future of the child depends on someone hearing and answering the appeal.

The little hands of the whole world are being extended to the people who love and follow the Saviour. The children of our homes, of our community, of our world are saying, "Lift us up that we may see." Jesus was offended with His disciples who pushed the children away. "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me!" What is that but a command to lift them up, to help them to see? It is an evil thing to offend little children, to be deaf to the appeal of their need. Here is, indeed, a great human fundamental. There are no wicked children, no pagan children. The crowds trample them into wickedness and paganism. Here is a great present responsibility. Take the children on your shoulder, weary though you may be. Lift them into your heart, however full it may be. While doing something for them they will do great things for you. The workman and the little girl each had their blessing.

95

"FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH"

I HAVE often thought of the plague of darkness which God sent upon Egypt. It was described as a darkness which might be felt, a darkness that was like blindness. No one moved, for no one knew how to find the way. I have experienced darkness that brought to mind this darkness of Egypt. A company of us were once in Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky. The only light we had was from a torch in the hand of our guide. In one of the arched chambers he extinguished his torch. The result was striking. There just wasn't any light! It was a darkness whose pitchy blackness might be felt. And sometimes I have been in the woods when there was no moon and when heavy clouds quenched the light of the stars. Not an object could be discovered, so dark was the night. But a flash of lightning reveals the path and the trees and is reflected in the water of the lake. I still remember how brilliant the light seemed when our guide struck a match to relight his torch in the cave.

There are flashes of truth like that. When the moral landscape is obscured and no way appears someone is given the light of truth and the way is made plain. It was such a flash of truth that indicated the way for the Christian Endeavor. It inspired the great motto, "For Christ and the Church." There was inky darkness in many quarters when that re-

vealing light flashed. The heart of the young people caught the light and fixed it in the sky. No one can ever calculate the benefit to the Church and to the world of that flash of light. Some of our greatest men have owned their spiritual and moral indebtedness to the Christian Endeavor.

When the lightning flashes in the darkness there are outstanding revelations. If there is a path, it is shown. Conditions which surround you are made manifest. "For Christ and the Church!" Here was a path along which there was an escape from spiritual stagnation! Here was a way that did not go in a deadening circle. It means discipleship that has escaped the academic and is girded for service. It is a pledge of loyalty not only to Christ, but to His Church. It is a recognition of the Church as essential to Christ whatever human weaknesses may be attached to it. Young people pledged to Christ and the Church will never go far wrong! Discipleship pledged to Christ and the Church will carry forward the plans so definitely laid down in the Scriptures. It was a wonderful flash of truth that revealed this pathway of life and service. It was light shining in the darkness.

96

"BE YE WARMED AND FILLED!"

A FRIEND was speaking very critically of churches in general and of ours in particular because of the appeals that are always being made for help for somebody or something, and thereby interfering with the worship of the congregation. The list is as long as the sorrows and frailties of humanity. What could I say in defense of myself or of our church? For I was guilty of letting some appeals get through my hands to the Session and to you, my people.

Did my friend have a case? Do such appeals hinder spiritual worship? Some way, as I listened to the condemnation of my friend as he sat in my study, I did not feel condemned. Such sense of guilt as I had was for my part in suppressing appeals for worthy causes that had come in these distressing days. I had some anxiety lest the voice I had stifled might really be Christ's voice. To whom would these appeals come if not to the Church? Are we not representatives of Christ? Are we not custodians of His Gospel, of His sympathy and funds? Is it not our task to bind up the wounds of sufferers as we can, to shelter the shelterless? All of this goes with the preaching of any Gospel that is worth preaching. We cannot say, "Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled" unless we "give those things which are needful."

These appeals bring discomfort because they make

us face unhappy conditions and difficult problems. But we cannot hide from responsibility by banishing the appeals! We can only escape responsibility by doing our duty as best we can! To whom shall I go with the anguish of hungry children and the sorrows of the aged? Where shall I take the needs of Christ's great Cause?

But these appeals should not bother any Christian or interfere with worship! If you have some of the Lord's money in your possession, and the cause appeals to you, then you act as His agent in dispensing His funds. If you have some of your own from which you feel justified in giving, then you become the donor instead of the dispenser. If you have neither, then what is the harm in letting the appeal go by? You have already done what you could! "Be ye warmed and filled" is the word of the Church. But if it is not an empty word it must be followed up by appeals and collections.

97

"THAT IS A DINGY BUS"

ONE afternoon while out making calls and looking after my duties in the parish I stopped in front of an automobile agency on an errand. A friend who was standing on the sidewalk remarked, "That is a mighty dingy bus you drive." It had never occurred to me that my car was either old or dingy, for it was going as well as it ever did; and it always did what was expected of it. So I felt like resenting the remark reflecting on my machine. But my friend wasn't through. He not only criticized the paint and the fenders, but threw a depreciating word at the "spare" on the rear of the car. It had a band of bare cord all around it, eloquent of service on the road. A tire man standing by said, "That is an old tire and the rubber is rotten." But I noticed when he jabbed his sharp pencil into the rubber the pencil was broken and the rubber was uninjured. I began to realize that my outfit did not look trim compared to a new car that was standing near.

But there was an answer to these remarks. Here was judgment "according to the appearance" and not "righteous judgment." Some scars are badges of honor. Some dingy appearances are not to be ashamed of. I had driven this car that was being criticized fifty thousand miles, mostly from house to house in the pastoral work of the church through the streets

of the city. Its had been a daily service. It had stood in the burning sun of summer and the cold of winter. It had sheltered me from rain and had plowed a way for me through the snow. The days were exceptional when it stood idle in the garage. This service was rendered with a minimum of expense for upkeep and fuel. Moreover that old tire that the rubber man attempted to puncture with his pencil was an original tire. It came with the machine four years ago. After doing duty on the wheel for twenty-two thousand miles it had continuously served as a spare. The machine had never gone out in all its fifty thousand miles without it. I had come to think of that tire they were making fun of as a handsome piece of property. The scar of the road was a badge of service.

And life is like that. There are always people standing around making hasty judgments from appearances. They forget about the wear of the road. They are impressed by the glitter of the new. But real value is in service. What can a man or a machine or a tire do? The manager had the right point of view when he broke into the discussion with the remark, "Yours was one of the first cars we sold, and I am prouder of it than of a new car which has its record to make." And I thought of the Scripture, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." I think I quoted it to my automobile friends, for it applies both to machines and men.

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